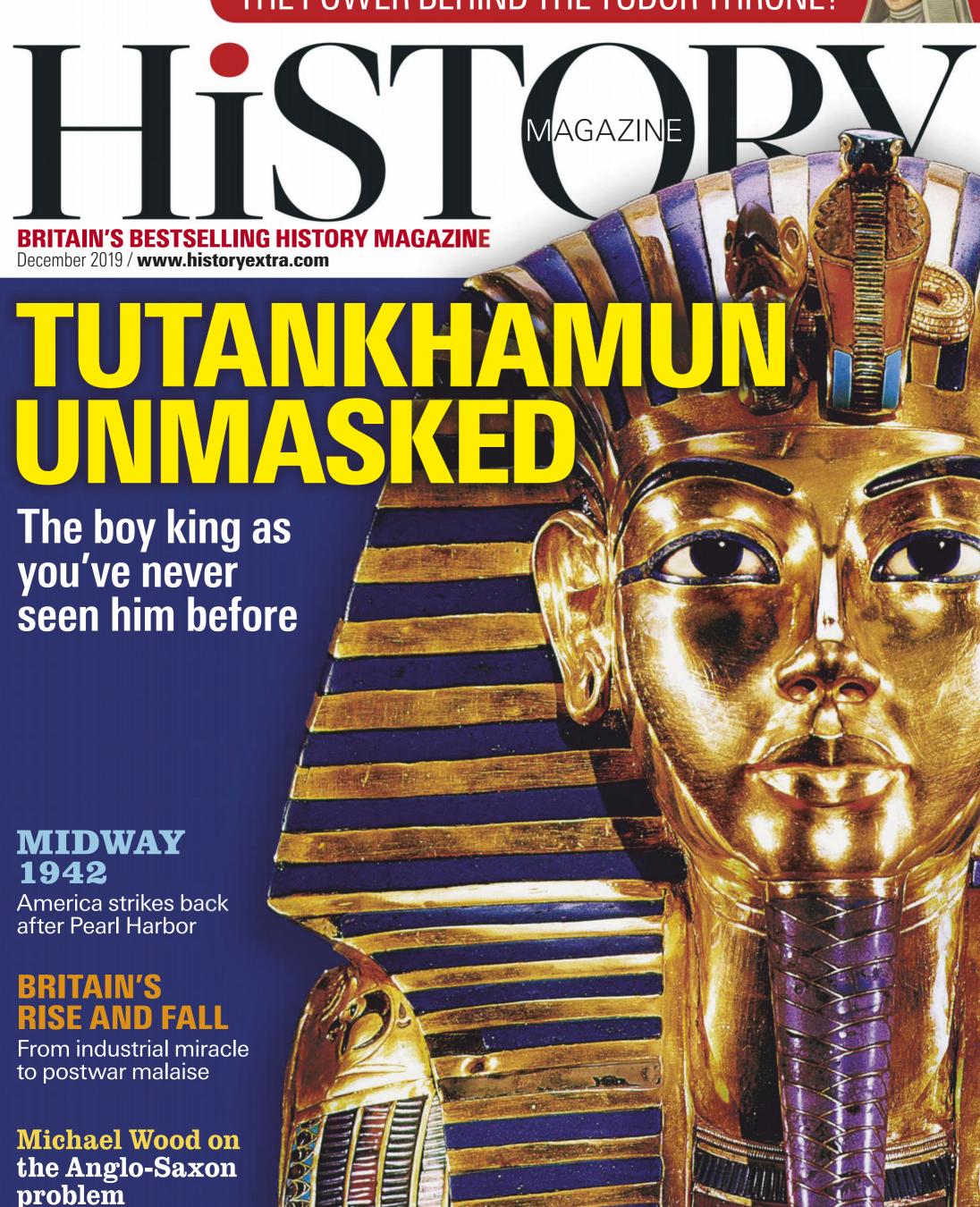
BBC

## MARGARET BEAUFORT THE POWER BEHIND THE TUDOR THRONE?







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## BBC

#### DECEMBER 2019

One of the most high-profile exhibitions of recent years arrives in Britain this month when Tutankhamun: Treasures of the Golden Pharaoh opens at London's Saatchi Gallery. It's testament to the enduring fascination with **Egypt's boy king**, whose story is still cloaked in mystery. For this month's cover feature, we asked Egyptologist Joann Fletcher to offer a new perspective on Tutankhamun through seven surprising revelations about his life, death and legendary tomb. You'll find that on page 22.

One of the historical ideas infusing the continuing Brexit debate has been Britain's 20th-century decline, which saw a country that was once the world's superpower eclipsed by a number of rivals. Whether or not leaving the EU might offer a chance to reverse this trend has become a central bone of contention. On page 43, historian David Reynolds revisits the idea of **national decline** and posits that it is Britain's rise – rather than fall – that is particularly remarkable.

While Brexit may have dominated the recent news agenda, the history world has been afire with a debate about

**Anglo-Saxon studies**. Involving accusations of elitism, racism and sexism, the arguments have also called into question whether the term 'Anglo-Saxon' is itself still fit for purpose. On page 10, Michael Wood outlines the key developments and offers his own take on a highly sensitive topic. We would of course welcome your thoughts, too, through our social media and letters pages. Enjoy the issue.

#### **Rob Attar**

Editor

#### THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS



#### **Alexander Watson**

I find the story of Przemyśl fortress extraordinarily dramatic. Early in the First World War, the future of Europe depended upon a multinational force of underequipped, middle-aged soldiers battling a mighty Russian invasion. Alexander recounts how a

fortress siege changed the

course of the war on page 30



#### **Edoardo Albert**

When my archaeologist brother-in-law invited me to visit excavations at Bamburgh, I never imagined it would spark 20 years of research into the kingdom of Northumbria and its greatest king, Oswald the White Blade. Edoardo tells the story of

Oswald's victory at the battle

of Heavenfield on page 62



#### Joann Fletcher

Like so many people the world over, I've been dazzled by the contents of Tutankhamun's tomb since childhood. And yet it's only quite recently that the true significance of these treasures has begun to be more fully understood.

Joann unearths seven surprising truths about Egypt's boy king on page 22

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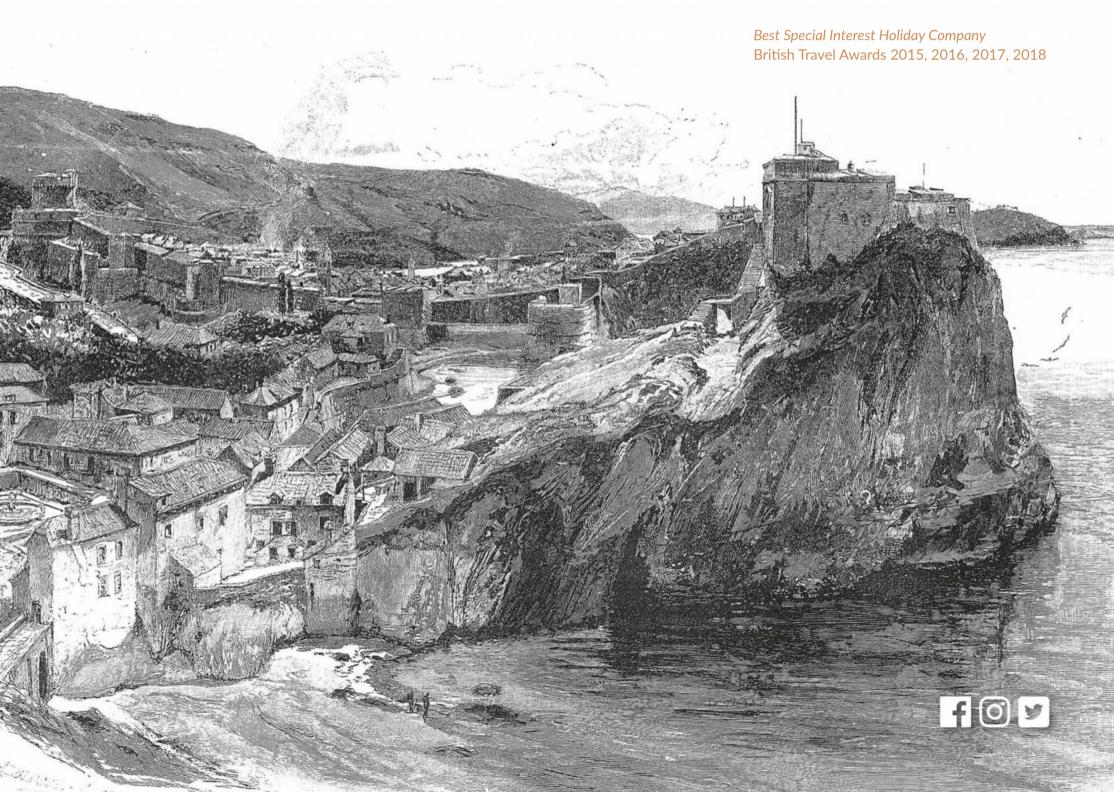
The Danube:

**Celebrating Beethoven** 

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Bengal by River

16-27 November 2020



NEWS ANNIVERSARIES COMMENT

## THIS MONTH IN HISTORY



# BACKSTORY TO LIFE

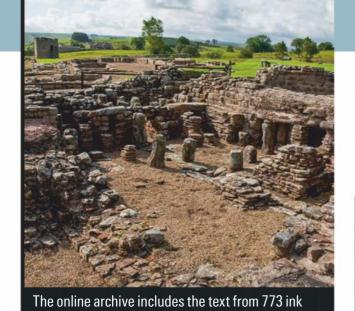
I didn't know my greatgrandma, Mary. Until Ancestry helped me discover the school where she was Head Girl, the sisters she gained when her dad remarried, and how she made a living painting murals.

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#### **ROMAN BRITAIN**

## Ancient writings hit the web

writing tablets found at Vindolanda Roman fort

housands of texts dating back to the Roman occupation of Britain have been made freely available to the public via a vast web archive.

Relaunched in September with new material, Roman Inscriptions of Britain Online (*romaninscriptionsofbritain.org*) now provides access to nearly 4,000 ancient writings discovered across the country.

Featuring images of the original artefacts, highlights include the Bloomberg tablets – a set of wooden tablets excavated ahead of construction on Bloomberg Media Group's London headquarters between 2010 and 2014. Mostly dating from the second half of the first century AD, the tablets offer a unique insight into life in the city, with one even bearing the address "Londinio Mogontio" ("In London, to Mogontius") – the earliest known written reference to the future UK capital.

Elsewhere on the site, readers can also examine a collection of 773 texts found at Vindolanda Roman fort in Northumberland during the 1970s, including a birthday party invite sent to Sulpicia Lepidina, the wife of the camp's commander.

The searchable library has been created by Scott Vanderbilt and colleagues from the research group LatinNow, centred at the University of Nottingham.

Dr Alex Mullen, associate professor in classical studies, said it would allow users to find out what was available in their local museum at the "click of a button".

She added: "Roman Britain might not have as many written texts as some of the other provinces of the Roman empire, but our long obsession with collecting and publishing them systematically means we have a record that is second to none.

"This fantastic resource assembles everything in one place, with access to the texts, images [and] archaeological context for anyone working on, or interested in, Roman Britain."

#### HISTORY IN THE NEWS

A selection of the stories hitting the **history headlines** 



#### Historian tracks down lost will of Haitian queen

The will of a 19th-century Caribbean queen has been discovered in the UK's National Archives. The document, found by Dr Nicole Willson from the University of Central Lancashire, sheds new light on Marie-Louise Coidavid, the wife of Haiti's self-proclaimed king, Henry Christophe. Following her husband's downfall and suicide in 1820, Marie-Louise settled in Italy, where the will – an English translation of a lost original – suggests she lived a comfortable existence.



Researchers tested the contents of bottles found in the graves of Bronze and Iron Age infants in Bavaria

#### Hever Castle unveils 'unseen' portrait of Richard III

A late 16th-century portrait of Richard III has gone on public display for the first time. The painting, which has been purchased from a private collection, now hangs among a series of royal portraits in the Long Gallery at Hever Castle, Kent – the childhood home of Anne Boleyn. Despite having been created more than a century after Richard's death in 1485, experts believe that it is based on a lost portrait of the Plantagenet monarch painted from life.

#### Online map shows extent of Scottish witch hunts

A map of Scotland showing the places of residence of 3,141 alleged 'witches' has been published online. The University of Edinburgh resource at *witches.is.ed.ac.uk* utilises material from the Survey of Scottish Witchcraft, set up to provide a picture of witch-hunting between 1563 and 1763. The news comes as plans to erect a memorial beacon for accused witches was rejected by residents in Torryburn – home of Lilias Adie, who died in prison while awaiting trial.



A bust of Marie-Louise Coidavid. Her husband, a leader of the Haitian Revolution, became king in 1811

#### Milk discovery reveals clues about ancient infants

Babies were being bottle-fed with animal milk more than 3,000 years ago, claims a new academic study. Research led by the University of Bristol has found traces of animal fats inside the drinking bottles of prehistoric children, suggesting that parents may have used goats' or cows' milk to wean their young. The study, published in the journal *Nature*, says this development would have enabled women to have more offspring, leading to population growth.





## As a racism row rumbles on, is it time to retire the term 'Anglo-Saxon'?

There are storms buffeting the world of Anglo-Saxon studies. Like the narrator of the Old English poem *The Seafarer*, many scholars are feeling battered by

"dire sea-surges" and "bitter breast cares". And the waves are coming from across the Atlantic. In the United States the academic Anglo-Saxon studies establishment, white-dominated and long perceived as excluding of BAME scholars, is now facing a backlash. The first target is the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists (ISAS), a body predominantly concerned with Old English literature and culture, which over the last 35 years has done a great deal to further knowledge of the pre-Conquest period but which now stands accused of institutional racism. Recently, one of its vice presidents, a woman of colour, resigned describing the field as "rife with antiquated views – prestige, elitism, sexism, racism and bigotry - which have seen many good people leave the field". On 19 September, after a torrent of recriminations on social media, ISAS announced that it will poll members on a change of name.

But the argument is about much more than a name. And it is by no means an issue confined to the US, though there it has gathered a particular intensity. American critics of 'Anglo-Saxon studies' feel the subject is by definition racist, that it has never escaped its roots in 18th and 19th-century colonialism when 'Anglo-Saxonism' in both the USA and Britain was used to endorse white supremacy. The slave-owning Thomas Jefferson, after all, founded the republic on imagined Anglo-Saxon roots, based on laws supposedly lost in 1066. This latter-day Anglo-Saxon commonwealth would come to be summed up in the acronym WASP – White, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant – a code for racial purity that white supremacists and neo-Nazis have embraced. And this situation, critics allege, is still implicitly underwritten by a white academic establishment that has failed to move with the times and embrace diversity, both in appointments and ideas.

Some US medievalists believe we have already reached the point where reclaiming 'Anglo-Saxon' is not possible. Dr Mary Rambaran-Olm, whose resignation from ISAS triggered the current crisis, put it to me: "It's not about 'taking back' the term. We have lost it, and for students of colour in medieval studies, the term carries racist connotations that don't represent who they are."

This is not a point that's restricted to academia. Racism has exploded in public culture in the Trump era, and especially since 2017's white supremacist rally in Charlottesville. For another critic, Dorothy Kim (assistant professor of English at Brandeis University), "the medieval western European past has been weaponised by white supremacist, white nationalist, KKK and Nazi extremist



**Flashpoint** The Charlottesville 'Unite the Right' rally of August 2017 supercharged racial tensions in the United States

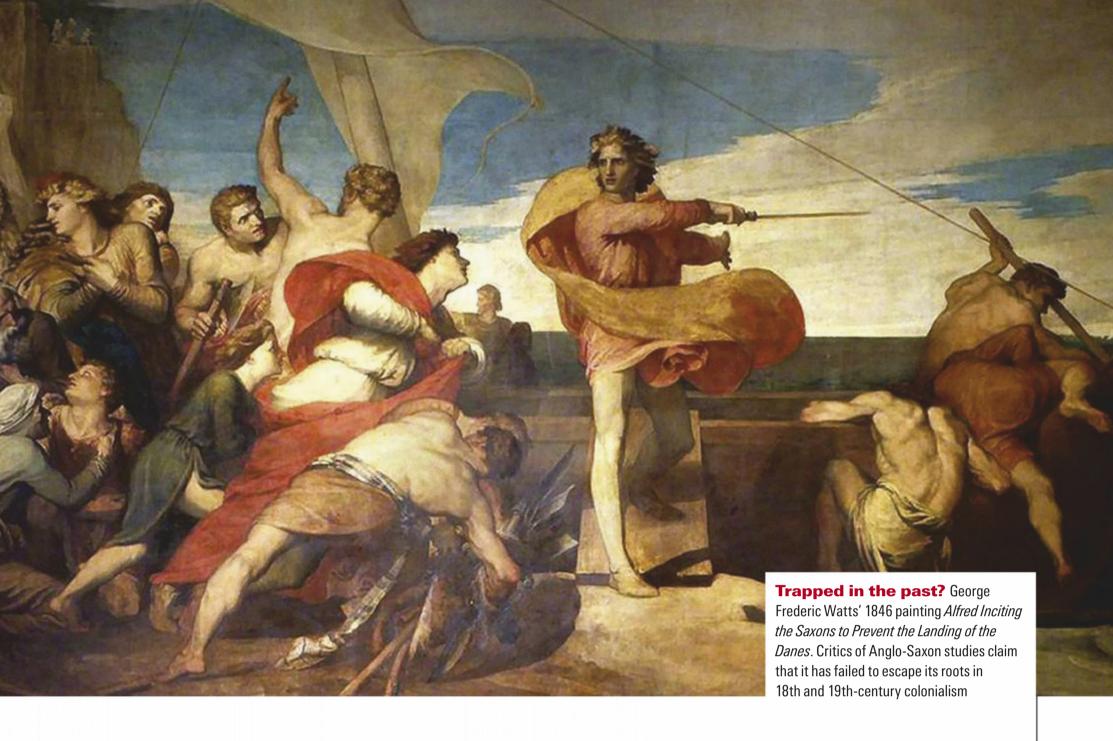
groups, who are often college students". For Kim, US colleagues must face up to teaching medieval studies at a time when the politics of the US academic community is mired in a power struggle, when old tropes and structures of white supremacy have been given new force under Trump.

The racist understanding of the term 'Anglo-Saxon' as defining white Anglo-Americans has a long history, and is now pervasive among certain groups, as Dr Adam Miyashiro, assistant professor of literature at Stockton University, New Jersey, pointed out in an open letter that really began the current conversation. He even cites an 'Aryan Nation' prison gang in the US, which built up a religion called 'Theodism' around the heroic poem *Beowulf*.

That is at the crazier end of white supremacy, but in the view of the American scholar and author Mary Dockray-Miller, the issue goes right to the core of settler-colonial, white supremacist ideology: "Outside the university, the phrase 'Anglo-Saxon' did not refer to early medieval English. Instead, it was racial and racist, freighted with assumptions of privilege and superiority. The cultural rhetoric of Manifest Destiny specifically defined 'Anglo-Saxons' as superior to enslaved and free Africans, Native Americans, Mexicans, and numerous other groups defined as non-white, including Irish and Italian immigrants. The

#### MORE FROM US

Read more columns by Michael Wood at historyextra.com



titles of college courses in Anglo-Saxon also carried these racial connotations and cultural associations."

In the US the whole debate has become highly impassioned, with bitter exchanges on social media. That's quite a shock to those who, for decades, have seen 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'Anglo-Saxons' as 'neutral' and 'purposeful' terms.

#### **British exasperation**

So is this another case of two nations divided by a single language? Is this a controversy rooted in the very circumstances of the founding of the American republic and the cultural ideas that still underpin it? Some British scholars are exasperated by what they see as a US problem, centred on literature, as opposed to history, archaeology and material culture. One told me: "There seems to be little willingness to acknowledge the fact that these terms are used differently in the UK than in the USA. In the UK they are used in common parlance to describe the period and people who lived within the polities that became the kingdom of England between the end of Roman Britain and the Norman conquest, ie, simply as labels to describe a discrete historical time period."

That's true, of course – and, as such, the term is embedded in the National Curriculum for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, which all school pupils in England follow. And it is probably fair to say that the story of Anglo-Saxon England as taught today is about diversity, not homogeneity. In UK universities this certainly has been the view since the late sixties when I was a student. We were influenced by the Marxist school of history, of Rodney Hilton, Christopher Hill and EP Thompson. For us, the racist views of, say, EA Freeman were a Victorian ideology that needed

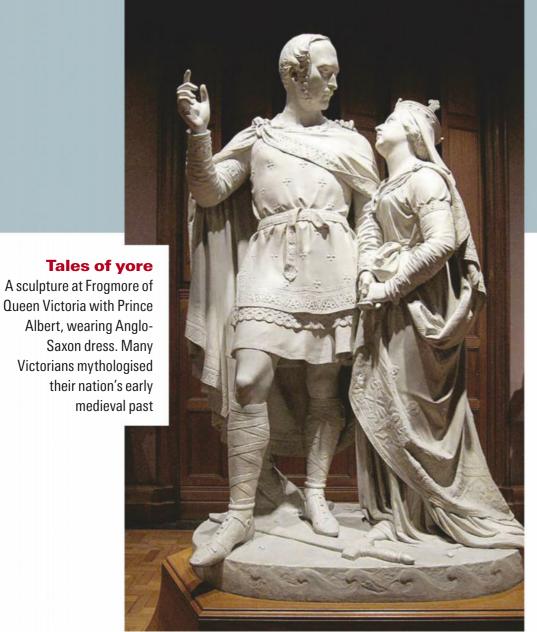
analysis but rested on pure fantasy; and to my knowledge, doing outreach today in schools, they play no role in the current broad public understanding of the period. As one university lecturer told me: "Most of us who teach early medieval history and archaeology in the UK deal with this, overtly and explicitly in our teaching, because it is a core element of understanding the development of the subject, and we want our students to be critically aware of the ways that language and history are used and misused in contemporary discourse."

However, I think we in the UK must take developments in the US seriously. Racism is to be condemned everywhere and in every form – and in Britain, too, diversity is a major issue in the humanities. Last year, a Royal Historical Society report on gender and ethnicity showed that a shockingly small percentage of people from BAME backgrounds are teaching in schools, colleges and universities; 96 per cent of university historians are white. The critics are right: things have got to change.

#### A bar to understanding?

So, returning to the questions with which we began: has the time come to retire the term 'Anglo-Saxon'? Is it a bar to understanding and communication, imprisoning us in the racist views of the past? We can't answer these questions without acknowledging the fact that, contrary to what some people have been stating on social media, the Early English *did* use the term 'Anglo-Saxons' of themselves. On the continent in the

We in the UK must take developments in the US seriously. In Britain, too, diversity is a major issue in the humanities



Light of Africa
Scholars from across the known world converged on early medieval England, among them the Libyan monk Hadrian, depicted here as white though "a man of African race"

eighth century, Paul the Deacon speaks of the "Anglisaxones"; Alfred and his successors used "King of the Anglo-Saxons" as a title for their new order. We may drop 'Anglo-Saxonists', then – we may prefer 'Early English' – but we cannot dispense entirely with 'Anglo-Saxons'.

What we should remember, though, is that this was not an ethnic signifier, and their world was diverse. In the 10th century, King Æthelstan's courts were attended by people from at least four different British language traditions, alongside people who spoke four major Old English dialect groups and two Scandinavian languages. There they were joined by scholars and visitors from Francia, Germany and Ireland. No wonder that the 10th-century monk Wulfstan Cantor observed that England was a land "of many different languages and customs". Their world was multilingual, and they were well aware that their culture consisted of many strands: Latin, Hebrew, Greek and, as the English scholar Alcuin put it, "the light that came from Africa". (The Libyan Hadrian, a "man of African race", along with the Syrian Theodore, is the most important figure in the history of education in England.)

The early English story is of great importance to us all: it is one of the roots of our modern world, in language, literature, law and governance. This is what makes it so

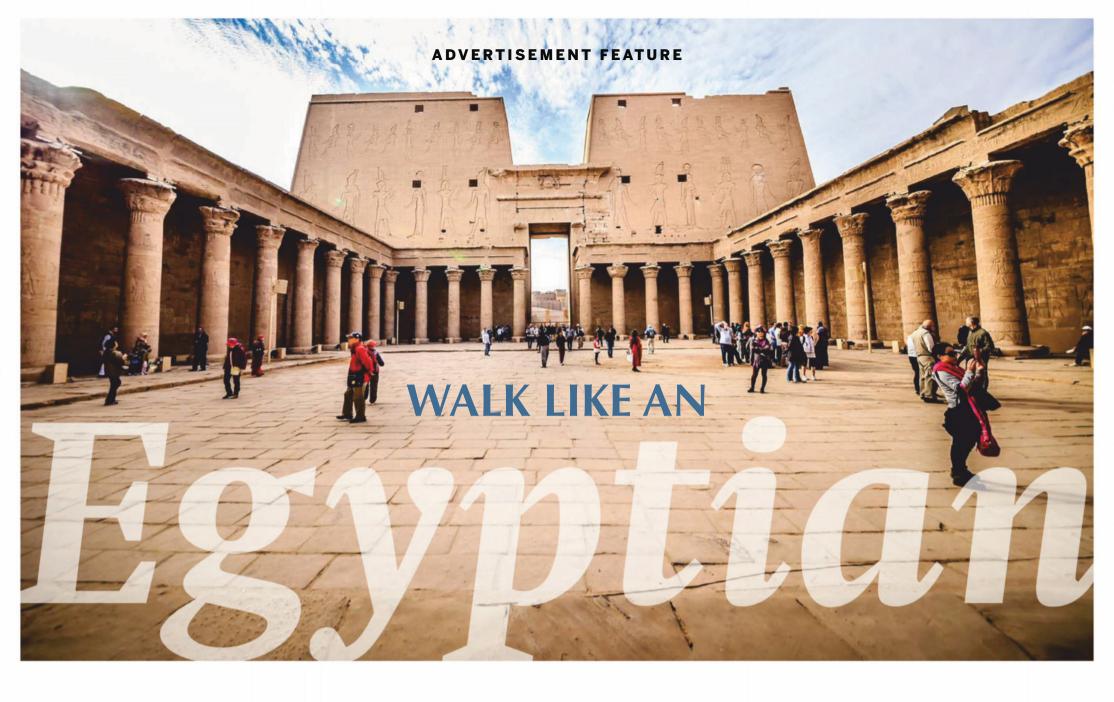
interesting, and so worth studying. In the field there's now a huge variety of study options – in ethnicity, gender, feminism and masculinity. So this is just the moment to reboot it: reinvent and explore new directions. That's my hope for the next phase of the study of early England. In the United States, especially, it must change – and fast. There, many feel the battle over 'Anglo-Saxon' culture is already lost. But in the Trump era the fight for the humanities must make no concession to racism, nor to the infection of universities by the growing tide of white supremacism, and fake history on the internet and social media.

So change should not be feared. With goodwill it will be very positive. Reframing the discipline and opening it up to different perspectives (a process that has been ongoing since the seventies, especially influenced by the feminist movement) will be of immense benefit to all. And it is vital that this happens. Otherwise, the subject will atrophy and cease to be of value, both to those who study it and to the public at large – this is, after all, the crucial link on which scholarship depends. As Clare Downham, a reader in Irish studies at the University of Liverpool, puts it: "This is a very important conversation to have. It is essential for the future of medieval studies that it is made more inclusive so that it attracts the highest calibre scholars, to generate new understandings and perspectives, and to inspire future generations both inside and outside academia."

Here's a story to end with. Not long ago, I was talking at a school in the old mill town of Rochdale, whose pupils were mainly children or grandchildren of immigrants from the subcontinent. They were starting their history projects, and most naturally turned to the industrial revolution. But one bright 12-year-old of Pakistani heritage put up his hand: "Sir, Rochdale is mentioned in Domesday Book, and I'm doing my project on Anglo-Saxon Rochdale, about the villeins and slaves." Now he's the kind of budding historian I hope one day to see speaking at an international conference on the Early Middle Ages in Britain.

Michael Wood is professor of public history at the
University of Manchester. He has presented numerous
BBC series, and his books include *The Story of England* (Viking, 2010)

**II** Contrary to what's written on social media, the Early English *did* describe themselves as 'Anglo-Saxons'



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## ANNVERSARIES

**DOMINIC SANDBROOK** highlights events that took place in November in history

**6 DECEMBER 1240** 

## The Mongols terrorise Kiev

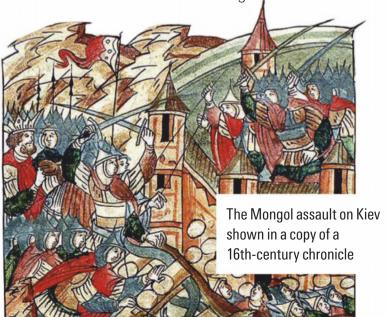
The city is laid to waste by invaders

s winter came to Kiev, its people waited for the cataclysm. Three years earlier, the Mongols had swept into the western Eurasian steppes. First Ryazan fell, then Vladimir. By the autumn of 1240 the invaders were approaching the glittering domes of Kiev, then one of the largest cities in the world.

Well aware of the city's wealth, the Mongols gave its inhabitants a chance to surrender, but they refused. The *Hypatian Codex* tells the story of what happened next. Led by Batu Khan, the Mongols arrived "with a mighty host of soldiers and surrounded the city... one could not hear anything as a result of the great din caused by his screeching carts, countless bleating camels and neighing herds of horses". Meanwhile, Batu's catapults "hurled their missiles without cessation and breached the walls".

By the night of 5 December, the Mongols had taken the ramparts. The next morning, as they poured into the city, looting, raping and killing, hundreds of Kiev's citizens fled inside the Church of the Virgin Mary. But so many stampeded up the stairs towards the dome that the structure collapsed beneath their weight. There was no escape from the slaughter.

Six years later, a papal envoy passed the ruins of what had once been Kiev, now a post-apocalyptic wasteland. The people had been enslaved, only 200 houses still stood, and there were "countless skulls and bones of dead men lying about on the ground". Kiev, he wrote, "has been reduced almost to nothing".







#### **1 DECEMBER 1822**

**Dom Pedro I** is crowned the first emperor of Brazil in the **Old Cathedral of Rio de Janeiro**. The ceremony, based on Catholic rituals, was immensely elaborate – but the Brazilians only used it once more, for his son Pedro II.



#### **16 DECEMBER 1989**

#### Romanians rise up against communism

*Unrest in Timișoara triggers a nationwide revolution* 

In December 1989, tensions in the city of Timişoara were approaching breaking point. After months of controversy, a local ethnic Hungarian pastor, László Tőkés, had finally pushed the communist authorities too far. Having preached against the regime and spoken to foreign reporters, Tőkés had seen his power cut off and his ration book confiscated. Now he faced eviction from his little church flat.

On the 15th, the day scheduled for the eviction, a crowd of Tőkés's ethnic Hungarian parishioners formed a human chain outside the flat. The next day, 16 December, the mayor arrived and commanded the crowd to disperse by 5pm if they wanted to avoid repercussions. They told him to produce a written promise that Tőkés's eviction would be cancelled; the mayor said he would, but nobody believed him.

Tőkés himself begged the crowd to leave, but they refused, convinced that he was only asking under pressure from the secret police. Dusk fell, and the crowd remained, larger than ever, the Hungarian ranks now swollen with hundreds of Romanians. They started singing banned patriotic songs. Then somebody started chanting "Down with communism!"

Soon they moved off towards the city centre, where they began chanting outside the party headquarters. The police waded in, opening fire with tear gas canisters and water cannons. But the crowds had become much too big for them; far from being dispersed, the demonstrators seized control of the water cannons and threw them into the river.

By now the situation had escalated from a riot into a revolution. The next day, open fighting broke out between the rebels and the police, the streets littered with rubble and bodies. The authorities declared martial law in Timişoara, but it was too late. By the following day, the crowds had started waving Romanian flags with the emblem of the Socialist Republic cut out. By the 20th, the city belonged to the rebels. The next day, the revolution spread to Bucharest.

After five years of work, the **Glasgow Underground Railway opens** to passengers.
But that evening, after a **collision between two trains** under the river Clyde, it is closed again until the following January.



#### 8 DECEMBER 1813

At a concert for Austrian soldiers, **Beethoven** conducts the premiere of his **Seventh Symphony** to a tumultuous reception. "We are moved," he says, "by nothing but pure patriotism and the joyful sacrifice of our powers for those who have sacrificed so much for us."



Our illustration shows the Great Storm of 1703, which wreaked havoc across southern and central England – killing perhaps 8,000 people and sinking Royal Navy warships

#### **7 DECEMBER 1703**

#### Fierce storms batter Britain

Thousands are killed as winds and floods devastate the nation

hen Daniel Defoe got up on Friday, 7 December 1703, he noticed that it was extremely windy. He thought little of it until the evening, when he glanced at his barometer and spotted the "Mercury sunk lower than ever I had observ'd it". At first Defoe thought that "the Tube had been handled and disturb'd by the Children". He was wrong. That night, Britain was hit by one of the worst storms in its history. "No pen could describe it," he wrote, "no tongue can express it, no thought conceive it unless some of those who were in the extremity of it."

How many died will never be known, though some estimates suggest at least 8,000. In London, where the winds blew the lead roof off Westminster Abbey and destroyed perhaps 2,000 chimney stacks, Queen Anne took refuge in the cellars of St James's Palace. In the Channel, more than a dozen Royal Navy ships were sunk with the loss of hundreds of lives. In the West Country, hundreds of windmills were destroyed and the region also saw hundreds drowned as the Somerset Levels flooded.

Meanwhile, in Wells, the bishop and his wife were killed in their bed by a collapsing chimney.

Defoe spent the night with his family, unable to sleep for the noise and terror. Alarmed that their own roof might come down, he opened the door to see if they might sneak to safety. But when he saw a blizzard of tiles outside, he decided it was better to risk death "in the ruins of the house, rather than to meet most certain destruction in the open garden".

He survived, of course, and turned his experience into his 1704 volume *The Storm*, which is often described as the first modern journalistic book. But like most people, he was deeply shaken. A few weeks later, the government declared a national day of fasting, since the storm was an obvious sign of "divine displeasure" with England.



Rosa Parks' mugshot, taken in February 1956 after her arrest for involvement in the Montgomery Bus Boycott

#### **1 DECEMBER 1955**

### Rosa Parks sits to take a stand

The civil rights activist is arrested for refusing to give up her seat on the bus

I t was about six in the evening of 1 December 1955 when the 42-year-old Rosa Parks boarded the bus. For 12 years she had been active in the civil rights movement in Montgomery, Alabama, where black Americans were subject to suffocating segregation. She paid her fare and took her seat, in the front row of the designated 'colored' section. The bus moved off.

A few minutes later, the bus stopped in front of the Empire Theater. By this time it was almost full, and some white passengers were standing at the front. When the driver noticed, he ordered the first row of black passengers to give up their seats, as the regulations demanded. Rosa Parks was among them. And at that moment, she wrote: "I felt a determination cover my body like a quilt on a winter night."

The man next to her moved back; but she did not. The driver asked: "Why don't you stand up?" Parks replied: "I don't think I should have to." She was arrested. Four days later, the Montgomery bus boycott began.

"People always say that I didn't give up my seat because I was tired," Parks wrote later, "but that isn't true. I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day... No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in."

**Dominic Sandbrook** is a historian, author and broadcaster. His latest book is *Who Dares Wins: Britain*, *1979–1982* (Allen Lane, 2019)

#### WHY WE SHOULD REMEMBER...

## Nancy Astor, the first woman to take a seat in parliament

#### BY JUNE PURVIS

**On 1 December 1919,** 100 years ago, the American-born viscountess Nancy Astor became the first female MP to take her seat in the House of Commons. She had won the seat of Plymouth Sutton, for the Unionist (now Conservative) party, after her husband Waldorf Astor had vacated it, on his elevation to the House of Lords. Nancy Astor claimed she had not originally held any ambition to be a politician but that her husband had "put the idea" in her head.

As the first woman to enter a male-dominated parliament, Astor encountered widespread misogyny and condescension, in response to which she doled out several witty replies. "I find a woman's intrusion into the House of Commons as embarrassing as if she burst into my bathroom when I had nothing to defend myself, not even a sponge," quipped Winston Churchill. "You are not handsome

enough to have worries of that kind," was Astor's tart reply. Confident and tough, with a steely determination, she frequently engaged in banter with this sparring partner and other male MPs.

Astor was a backbencher throughout her parliamentary career, which lasted until 1945. Although she never held any ministerial post, she was influential in voicing concerns of women and children that previously had been ignored or marginalised. In later life she reflected that she had been "as good a feminist as anyone". Indeed, she was a firm believer in equality and worked with other female MPs across the political spectrum for the Equal Franchise Act of 1928 (which granted the vote to women over 21), as well as women's entry to the diplomatic service. A temperance advocate, in 1923 she successfully introduced the first Private Member's Bill sponsored by a female MP to ban the sale of alcohol to under 18s.

Yet the mercurial Astor became a figure of controversy, especially over her support for Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policy with Nazi Germany in the 1930s. A member of various peace organisations, she failed to understand the threat that Hitler posed and invited several Nazi sympathisers to her home. Vilified by the press and public for fascist sympathies, Astor did not contest the 1945 general election, despite the fact that she had turned against Chamberlain in 1940.

Despite this, Astor's place in history is assured. The first woman to participate in parliamentary discussions about law-making, she pioneered a path for female politicians who followed after. The fact that 32 per cent of MPs are now women represents progress. But the project that Astor began 100 years ago is far from complete.

**II** Confident and tough, with a steely determination, she frequently sparred with misogynist MPs **II** 





June Purvis is emeritus professor of women's and gender history at the University of Portsmouth. Her latest book is *Christabel Pankhurst:* A Biography (Routledge, 2018)



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#### II The people of Britain went to sleep – and woke up 11 days later II

The 3rd September 1752 did not exist. Neither did the 4th or the 5th, or indeed any of the days up to the 13th. In Britain those dates simply didn't happen.

People went to bed on the night of Wednesday 2 September and woke the next morning to discover it was Thursday 14 September. They were not dreaming and they had not slept for 11 days.

The lost days were the casualties of a new law. Under the Calendar (New Style) Act of 1750, Britain abandoned the old Julian calendar and adopted the 'new style' Gregorian calendar.

The Julian calendar had been created during Julius Caesar's rule as dictator of the Roman republic, and for a millennium and a half had been widely used across western Europe. However, it contained a tiny but critical flaw. It assumed the length of a year to be 365.25 days, whereas really it was slightly shorter at 365.2422 days.

Over the centuries, this tiny discrepancy meant that the dates in the calendar and the timings of the equinoxes increasingly diverged – first by minutes, then by hours and finally by days. This became increasingly problematic, in particular for the church, as Easter was calculated using the date of the spring equinox.

To solve this problem, the 16th-century pope Gregory XIII had issued a new calendar: the Gregorian calendar, named after him. It used a more accurate means of calculating the length of the year, and in 1582, Spain, Portugal, France, Poland, Italy and other Catholic states

adopted it. However, a number of Protestant countries, including Britain, rejected it.

Gradually, over the next 200 years, most Protestant nations relented and converted to the Gregorian calendar. But Britain held out, sticking with the Julian calendar. So by 1750, not only was there a discrepancy between the dates on the calendar and the arrival of the equinoxes, there were 11 days' difference between dates in Europe and those in Britain. This meant, for example, that back in the 16th century, when the gap between the two calendars was just 10 days, the Spanish recorded their armada reaching the Cornish coast on 29 July 1588, but in English sources the armada appears on 19 July. Confusing, to say the least.

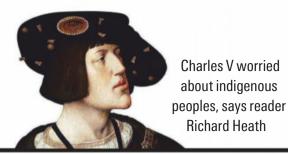
The Calendar Act of 1750 was the moment Georgian Britain finally came into alignment with the continent. It also remedied another quirk of the Julian calendar: the date of new year. The Julian year started with the Feast of Annunciation on 25 March, which was the official Christian new year. However, by the 18th century, new year in Britain was commonly being celebrated on 1 January. What this meant was that on the eve of 31 December 1750, for example, when the clocks struck midnight, it remained 1750. The year 1751 did not begin until the end of 24 March. To solve this confusion, the new law determined that 1751, which had begun on 25 March, finished on 31 December and lasted just 282 days, so that 1752 could begin on 1 January. And nine months later, in September, came the calendar nudge that consigned 11 days to history as the people of Britain slept.

David Olusoga is professor of public history at the University of Manchester, and the presenter of several BBC documentaries

BBC

# A matter of time Pope Gregory XIII and his advisors discuss calendar changes in Rome in 1582. Britain held out against the shift for almost two centuries

## LETTERS



#### **LETTER OF THE MONTH**

#### Wallis's genius

It was useful to have the truth of the Dambusters raid headlined in the interview with Max Hastings (Books Interview, October). There was little strategic value in the raid, which had a very limited impact on the German economy. This is hard to tell students given the value the raid had on British morale, so when I taught it as part of the Second World War the only angle to do so was from the impact on the domestic front. It certainly helped people to believe that Britain was hitting back at the Nazis.

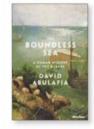
However, it did have another valuable effect: proving the genius of Barnes Wallis. His scheme worked and he was able to go back to his main interest, huge penetration bombs. This was exactly what was needed when the Germans constructed massive concrete bunkers such as the 4.5m-thick walls of U-boat pens and, even more so, the V2 rocket launch sites. His two big bombs, Tallboy (6 tonnes) and Grand Slam (10 tonnes) hit the ground at near-supersonic speed and did not explode until they had penetrated deep underground.

Normal bombs bounced off the concrete, but these bombs wrecked the target. For both the war against the U-boats in the Atlantic and the terrifying V2 rockets, the Barnes Wallis designs were decisive. It is highly likely it was these weapons, and not the Dambusters, that helped win the war.

Trevor Fisher, Stafford



Inventor Barnes Wallis developed penetration bombs as a way to target fortified military infrastructure



We reward the *Letter of the Month* writer with a copy of a new history book. This issue, that is **The Boundless Sea: A Human History of the Oceans** by David Abulafia. Read the review on page 72

#### Royal reassessment

I enjoyed reading John Edwards' review of *Emperor: A New Life of Charles V* by Geoffrey Parker in the November issue (*Books*). However, his mention of the ruthless exploitation of the Americas needs clarification. There is no doubt that Charles was desperate to lay his hands on the riches that flowed into Spain from the Americas – he needed money to pay for his wars against his many enemies in Europe. Nevertheless, he was concerned about the treatment of the indigenous peoples by the colonists, if only for the sake of his own soul.

As Parker points out, Charles's decrees in relation to the Americas often mentioned his "royal conscience" and the Ordinance of 1528 stated that the mistreatment of the indigenous inhabitants was "an offence against God". His attempts to moderate the actions of the conquistadores and colonists might not have been very successful, but they were sufficient to cause serious resistance and rebellion by the colonists, especially in Peru.

Charles V was certainly a "flawed individual" and perhaps difficult to "make likeable". However, he emerges very favourably when compared to his rival monarchs, Henry VIII and Francis I. He had far more complex and diverse territories to rule, was an excellent judge of character, rarely blamed his ministers when things went wrong, was in turn rewarded with loyalty, and showed conspicuous bravery on the field of battle.

#### Tragic sinking

Richard Heath, Cambridge

Regarding the Thames tragedy (*Anniversaries*, September), a worse disaster that we seldom hear about would follow on 15 June 1904 in New York. *The General Slocum* steamboat was taking a day trip on Long Island Sound with more than 1,300 passengers, mostly women and children from New York's German community. The ship caught fire and sank in the East river, killing more than 1,000 passengers, mostly women and children. Seven victims belonged to the family of my great-aunt.

Madeline Lopes, New Jersey

#### Distant decades

I was intrigued by the Q&A in the September issue on "whether previous generations referred to decades in a shortened form". When attending prep school in the fifties, the headmaster, born in the 1880s, would often tell us stories of his school days, "back in the nineties." There is also a line in Compton Mackenzie's



Sinister Street (1912), "Down came some account-book of the later seventies," meaning of course the 1870s. Mackenzie must have been confident that his Edwardian readers would have been familiar enough with the terminology for it not to appear out of place.

Jim Posner, Brisbane

#### Seen and heard

On seeing the title of Helen Fry's book *The Walls Have Ears* in the October edition (*Books*), it reminded me of going to Woodhead Hall in Staffordshire in 1949, as a fully trained wireless operator, to be taught extra Russian morse characters prior to joining the RAF 'Y' service. On entering the reception, I saw behind the desk, stuck to the wall, a large plaster cast of an ear, with the legend "Walls have ears" underneath. I wonder what happened to the ear when the building was returned to the private sector.

Tom Carroll, Nottingham

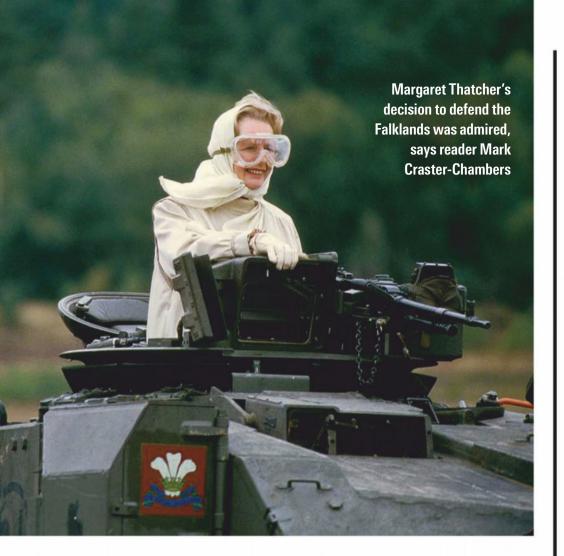
#### A justified war

The article on the Falklands War (*The Falklands Feelgood Factor*, November) brought back some memories, and it was



A Second World War-era aircraft observation post has a reminder for staff to be careful what they say

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY



very accurate in identifying the sentiment at the time. I was in high school and recall my dad telling me Argentina had invaded the Farne Islands! This was a common error, I think, and in *The Secret Diary of Adrian* Mole there is a scene where Adrian's father believes Argentina has invaded Scotland.

I would then add a memory of being reduced to a tear by Rod Stewart's song Sailing being played with the ships leaving. It was really emotional, and the sentiment in school was strongly that we were doing what was right, that you can't let another nation do this. There was also that feeling of 'Argie bashing' and footballers such as the popular Ossie Ardiles had to leave the country for a while.

I'm from the North East, never a Maggie stronghold, but memories of a picture of her sitting in a tank and the fact that we did what was right remain strong. People muttered, grudgingly, that she had done what mattered. Mark Craster-Chambers,

Stratford-upon-Avon

#### Correction

On the opening pages of *The Brutal Blitzkrieg* (September) we showed an image that was captioned "Jews stand with hands up before German soldiers in Warsaw, 1939". Reader Robert Wilkinson has written in to point out that the picture was from the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Apologies for the error.

#### WRITE TO US

We welcome your letters, while reserving the right to edit them. We may publish your letters on our website. Please include a daytime phone number and, if emailing, a postal address (not for publication). Letters should be no longer than 250 words. email: letters@historyextra.com Post: Letters, BBC History Magazine, Eagle House, Colston Avenue, Bristol BS1 4ST

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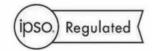
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## TUTANKHAMUN UNIMASKED

As the UK welcomes a new exhibition on Tutankhamun's tomb – considered by many the greatest archaeological discovery of all time – mystery still surrounds ancient Egypt's most famous son. Here, **Joann Fletcher** unearths seven intriguing truths about the pharaoh and his legendary treasures





#### He was not a unique 'boy-king' nor was his reign particularly brief

Often described as a tragic boy-king whose 10-year rule in Egypt ended only too swiftly, Tutankhamun was not really unique in either respect. At his accession in c1336 BC, he was aged around eight or nine, but this was not uncommon for an ancient Egyptian king. In c2278 BC, King Pepi II of the Old Kingdom had become

pharaoh aged around six, requiring his mother to act as regent until Pepi came of age. Similarly, Tutankhamun's grandfather Amenhotep III was approximately 10 years old at his accession in c1390 BC, and so again had been guided by his mother in the role of regent.

Among other youthful rulers, Tuthmosis III, the so-called 'Napoleon of ancient Egypt', was only two when

> he became pharaoh in c1479 BC and, later, King Ptolemy V, for whom the Rosetta Stone was produced, came to the throne in 204 BC aged only five. King Sesostris I

(c1965–1921 BC) had even boasted that the gods had considered him ready to rule when he was still in nappies, "not yet loosed from swaddling clothes".

As for the supposed brevity of Tutankhamun's reign, there is no reason to consider it as such in a world where 35 was the average life expectancy, and where even the elite died young by modern standards. His own great-grandfather Tuthmosis IV had similarly ruled for a single decade, as did the later king Merenptah. Ramses I, Sethnakht and Ramses VIII all managed only a few years at most. The record for regnal brevity, however, is surely held by Ptolemy XI, who was pharaoh for only 18 days in 80 BC.

Even the common claim that Tutankhamun's 10-year reign was insufficient time in which to construct him a tomb in the Valley of the Kings is illogical, since the huge tomb of Tuthmosis IV (who reigned about 60 years before him) was completed and decorated within his decade on the throne. In fact, earlier Old Kingdom monarchs Djedefre and Userkaf were both able to complete pyramid tombs of at least 50 metres in height during even briefer reigns.



crowned at around the age of six with his mother, who acted as regent

#### His tomb contained a lot more than just gold, as neatly folded underwear proves

Although the public gaze rarely extends beyond the gold, the tomb contained

another kind of treasure: a virtually intact royal wardrobe made up of a wide range of clothing in both child and adult sizes. From sumptuous regalia and neatly folded underwear to leather armour, linen socks, patterned gloves and fragments of an elaborate wig, all were stored inside the chests and boxes carefully placed within the tomb. With many of these emptied out during a spate of small-scale robberies soon after the burial, the royal officials charged with restoring the tomb hastily stuffed them back into the nearest receptacle, producing the creases, crumples and general confusion that greeted Howard Carter in 1922.

During the 10 years it took him to clear the tomb, Carter recognised the unique nature of the several hundred delicate garments, advising the need for their "very careful study". Yet, eclipsed by the gold on their arrival at Cairo Museum, most were placed in storage for 70 years until textile historian Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood and her team began their work, conserving the fragile originals while reconstructing 36 representative examples, from elaborate bead-encrusted robes to simple loincloths.

Recreating the ultra-fine quality of the ancient linen and its once vivid colours, the team also identified the original purpose of some of the garments. A pair of curious linen 'headdresses', for example, were actually meant to be worn on the arms to replicate the wings of a

falcon - a symbol of kingship. Unusual 'riding gauntlets' turned out to be linen socks with gaps between the large and smaller toes to accommodate the flipflop-style thongs of the royal sandals, whose soles portrayed Egypt's enemies, ready to be ground into the floor at every step.

Complemented by tapestry-woven necklines and borders naming the wearer as the "vanquisher of all the foes of Egypt" and "protector of the country", the further addition of golden collars, necklaces, earrings, bracelets and headgear ensured Egypt's ruler and living god would look the part at all times. Yet on long state occasions in the Egyptian heat, the mantle of state must have proved a heavy burden in every sense, especially when the king was still a child.

BRIDGEMAN/GETTY IMAGES/ NIN

Many of the objects found in his tomb were not made for him

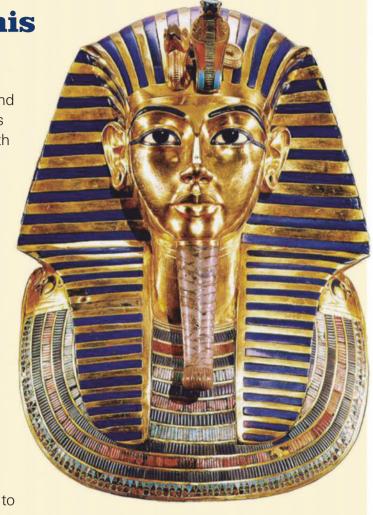
Although the new exhibition in London's Saatchi Gallery is entitled Tutankhamun: Treasures of the Golden Pharaoh, identifying the owner of these treasures is not as straightforward as it might seem. Virtually every object from the tomb is usually described as having belonged to Tutankhamun himself, but Egyptologists have long recognised that many - some say most - of the 5,000 or so items were not made for him, but for members of his family. This includes his immediate predecessors – his father, Akhenaten, and his stepmother Nefertiti, who most likely ruled briefly as pharaoh in her own right after Akhenaten's death and whose funerary objects were later recycled for Tutankhamun.

This would explain the distinctly different facial types of the three golden coffins and of the several hundred *shabti* (servant) figurines. It also explains the obvious physical differences among the statuettes dressed in kingly regalia, some of which are flat-chested while others have breasts. Although such features have been unconvincingly dismissed as quirks of an ancient

art style, some objects – from jewellery and weapons to calcite vessels, storage boxes and pen cases – are actually inscribed with the names of other members of the royal family, all of which have therefore been interpreted as 'family heirlooms'.

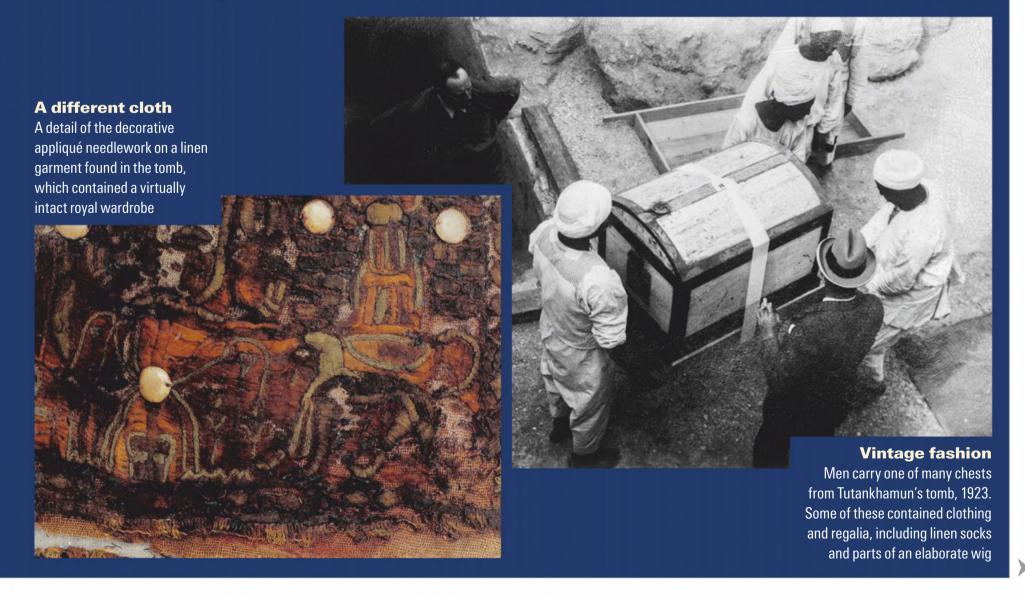
Yet this cannot be the case with those items intimately associated with Tutankhamun's mummified body, from the inlaid gold 'mummy bands' surrounding the linen wrappings to the four miniature coffins that once held the king's preserved entrails. All of these were originally inscribed for 'Ankhkheperure', the throne name taken by Nefertiti as ruler, just as Tutankhamun's throne name was actually 'Nebkheperure'.

Even the gold death mask, recently subjected to microscopic scrutiny, was found to have originally carried the name Ankhkheperure, before being reinscribed to read Nebkheperure. Clearly the sheer beauty of these objects so dazzled the modern world that it has taken almost a century to begin to work out for whom they were originally made, and why they were then reused.



#### **Golden boy**

Tutankhamun's funerary mask, inlaid with lapis lazuli and other semi-precious stones, was previously inscribed for another monarch



## 4

#### Tutankhamun was not buried alone

Although most pharaonic tombs are regarded as places in which monarchs were interred in solitary splendour, a considerable number of rulers were buried with other members of their family. This was a practice that continued into the 18th Dynasty (c1550–1295 BC), of which Tutankhamun was a member.

The tombs of Amenhotep II and Tuthmosis IV once held the bodies of children who had predeceased their royal fathers, while Amenhotep III was provided with a tomb complex large enough to accommodate the planned burials of his own wife and eldest daughter. Similarly, Tutankhamun's father, Akhenaten, was initially buried in the Royal Tomb at Amarna in the company of his mother and at least one of his daughters.

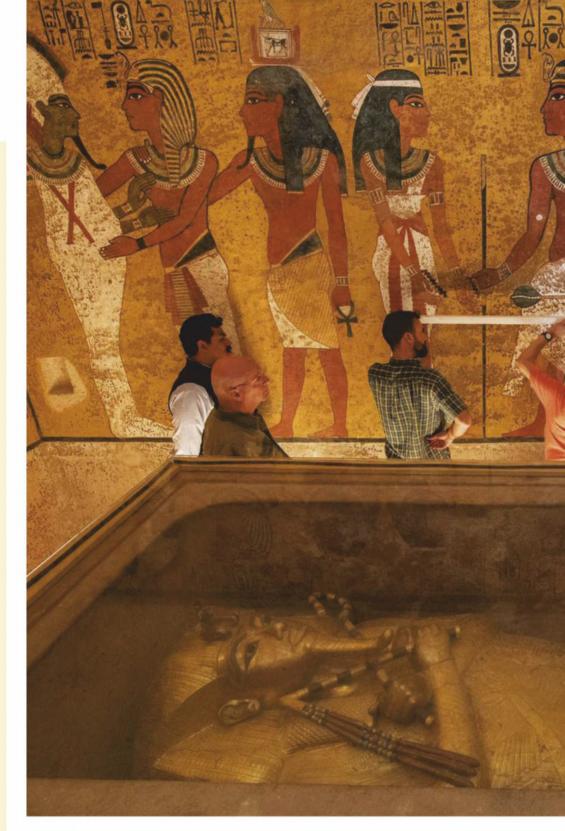
All of this means that it is perhaps unsurprising that Tutankhamun was also not alone in his tomb. When Carter was removing the contents of one of its side chambers, which he designated 'the Treasury', he discovered two tiny bodies that

had been carefully mummified, wrapped in linen, and provided with tiny gold masks and sets of small coffins. When examined in 1932 by anatomist Douglas Derry of Cairo's Kasr al-Ainy Medical School, both were revealed as stillborn female foetuses, one of five months' gestation and the other seven months – an estimation raised to nine months following x-ray examination in 1979.

This study and others since have identified the same scoliosis and related genetic conditions shared by Tutankhamun himself, so it is widely believed these two unnamed children were his daughters, whose premature deaths were followed by their interment in their father's tomb. Carter himself went even further, and in the grand tradition of casting Tutankhamun as a tragic figure, regarded the foetuses as the last representatives of the 18th Dynasty royal family, musing that "had one of those babes lived there might never have been a Ramses" - a reference to the famous Ramses Il of the subsequent dynasty.



**Royal tragedy** Tiny coffins found in Tutankhamun's tomb are thought to belong to stillborn daughters



#### Rumours of secret chambers in his tomb are just that - rumours

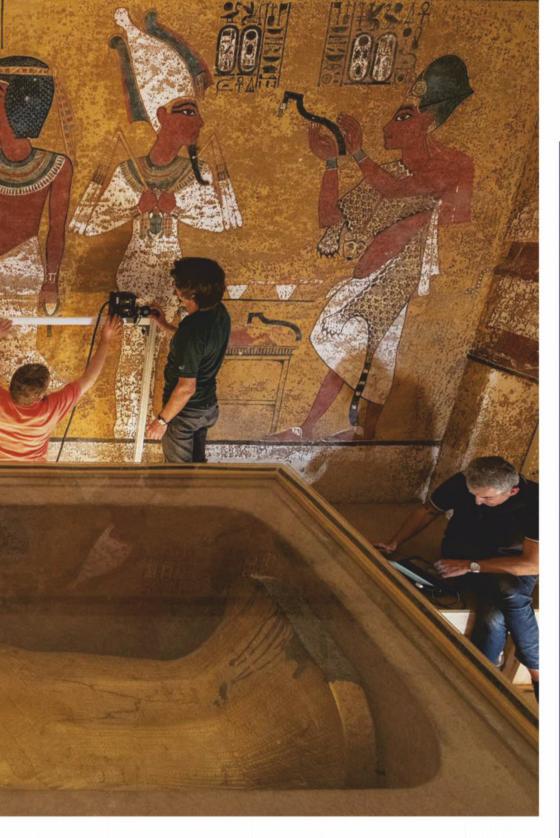
Tutankhamun's tomb has been a massive tourist draw since its discovery in 1922. But ever since its discovery, the effect of so many people crowding into such a small space had increased the levels of humidity, dust and microbacteria – and had begun to damage its painted wall scenes.

In an effort to solve this problem, a facsimile burial chamber was created, using high-resolution 3D laser scanning to reproduce the exact dimensions of the original. When the scan data was published in 2014, it revealed faint traces of what appeared to be two doorways on the north and west walls of the burial chamber. Egyptologist Nicholas Reeves interpreted these anomalies as entries to hidden chambers, which he believed would contain a further royal burial – in his opinion, most likely that of Nefertiti.

This sensational claim made headlines around the world. The Egyptian Ministry of

GETTY IMAGES/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC-KENNETH GARRETT





Antiquities commissioned further investigations using ground-penetrating radar (GPR) to detect any hidden voids, declaring they were "90 per cent sure" that further chambers did indeed exist. Yet a second GPR scan of the tomb, undertaken by engineers from the National Geographic Society in 2016, found no such hidden features, meaning that archaeologists proceeded to argue among themselves as the world media continued to speculate.

So Egypt's antiquities minister commissioned a third and final set of scans in 2018. Carried out by the University of Turin and two Italian imaging companies, again supported by National Geographic, the scan was crosschecked with the two previous studies, suggesting that the original anomalies were probably the result of the radar waves being affected by the wall plaster and stone sarcophagus. They concluded "with a very high level of confidence" that "the existence of hidden chambers... is not supported by the GPR data". The findings were accepted by Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, who added that these final scans "conclusively prove that there are no ac that is, at lea undertaken... there are no additional chambers or passages" - that is, at least, until the next scans are

#### **Hidden secrets?**

Engineers conduct a GPR scan of a suspected doorway in the tomb's north wall

#### There is no direct evidence that Tutankhamun was murdered

Although the tomb was discovered in 1922, it took Carter three more years of excavation before he could access Tutankhamun's body within the burial chamber, where it was protected inside a series of gilded shrines erected around the sarcophagus. Inside, within a nest of three coffins, the king's mummified body was stuck fast to the base of the innermost coffin, as a result of resin-based embalming fluids – so the autopsy carried out by Douglas Derry in 1925 required the use of heated knives to remove the body piece by piece.

Although he was unable to establish a cause of death, **Derry estimated Tutankha**mun was between 17 and 19 when he died – a claim confirmed in 1968 by the first x-rays of the body, which also revealed a small, dislodged bone fragment within the skull. The suggestion that this might have been caused by a blow to the head became a veritable whodunnit, the notion of foul play fitting the stereotype of the tragic boy-king so well that his 'murder' became virtual fact.

When the fragment was

shown to be postmortem damage, some turned their attention instead to the damaged chest and broken ribs. Likely caused when valuables were stolen from the reassembled body after its 1925 reinternment, such damage has nonetheless been claimed as evidence of a violent death inflicted by a chariot wheel in battle.

In 2005, CT scans highlighted that Tutankhamun's left femur had been fractured - the lack of healing meaning this was probably more postmortem damage. Yet some suggested the wound had become fatally infected, though the scans showed no evidence of that. The same study added that he might have succumbed to malaria, while others have claimed his death was hastened by syndromes such as Marfan, Klippel-Feil and Klinefelter's.

Ultimately, the only consensus remains that **Tutankhamun died around** 19, still older than several of his half-sisters and certainly his own stillborn daughters, whose demise was most likely related to the cumulative effects of the family's inbreeding.



Tutankhamun's mummy enters a CT scanner. There are multiple theories about how he died



household name, "the tomb of Tutankhamun" had actually been unearthed 13 years earlier by archaeologist Ernest Harold Jones.

Jones, who has since been virtually airbrushed from history, was born in the Yorkshire town of Barnsley in 1877. Described as a "dark-haired, small, pleasant young man", he, like his friend Carter, had gone out to Egypt to work as an archaeological artist before gaining sufficient skills to undertake excavations himself.

Jones spent successive excavation seasons in Egypt, initially at Beni Hasan in 1903, then at Esna, Hierakonpolis, Abydos and Amarna. By 1907 he was taken on by the wealthy American Theodore Davis, who was funding excavations in the Valley of the Kings. From then on, Jones was involved in the excavation of some of the valley's most significant tombs – from that of Tutankhamun's father, Akhenaten, to Tutankhamun's eventual successor, Horemheb. Initially responsible for drawing their

excavations, noticing the name of the then little-known 'Tutankhamun' on seal impressions, ring bezels and other finds that had begun to turn up around the valley.

In 1909, he discovered tomb KV58, which contained goldwork that again named Tutankhamun. Jones rightly suspected it to be a robbers' stash, but his boss Davis insisted it was "the tomb of Tutankhamun", announcing it as such in 1912 and declaring that "the Valley of the Kings is now exhausted".

Sadly, by then Jones had succumbed to tuberculosis, dying in his dig house in the valley, aged 34. With his colleagues Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon organising his funeral in Luxor, and taking over Davis's concession to dig in the valley, Jones himself was soon forgotten. Even his grave was lost during the moving of Luxor cemetery in 2013, a sad fate for the man who had helped pave the way to the discovery of the most famous tomb in history.

Professor Joann Fletcher is based at the University of York. Her latest book is *The Story of Egypt* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2015)

#### VISIT

Tutankhamun: Treasures of the Golden Pharaoh is at Saatchi Gallery in London from 2 November 2019-3 May 2020. tutankhamun-london.com

#### LISTEN

A new BBC Radio 4 documentary, *The Cult of* King Tut, is available on BBC Sounds: bbc.co.uk/sounds







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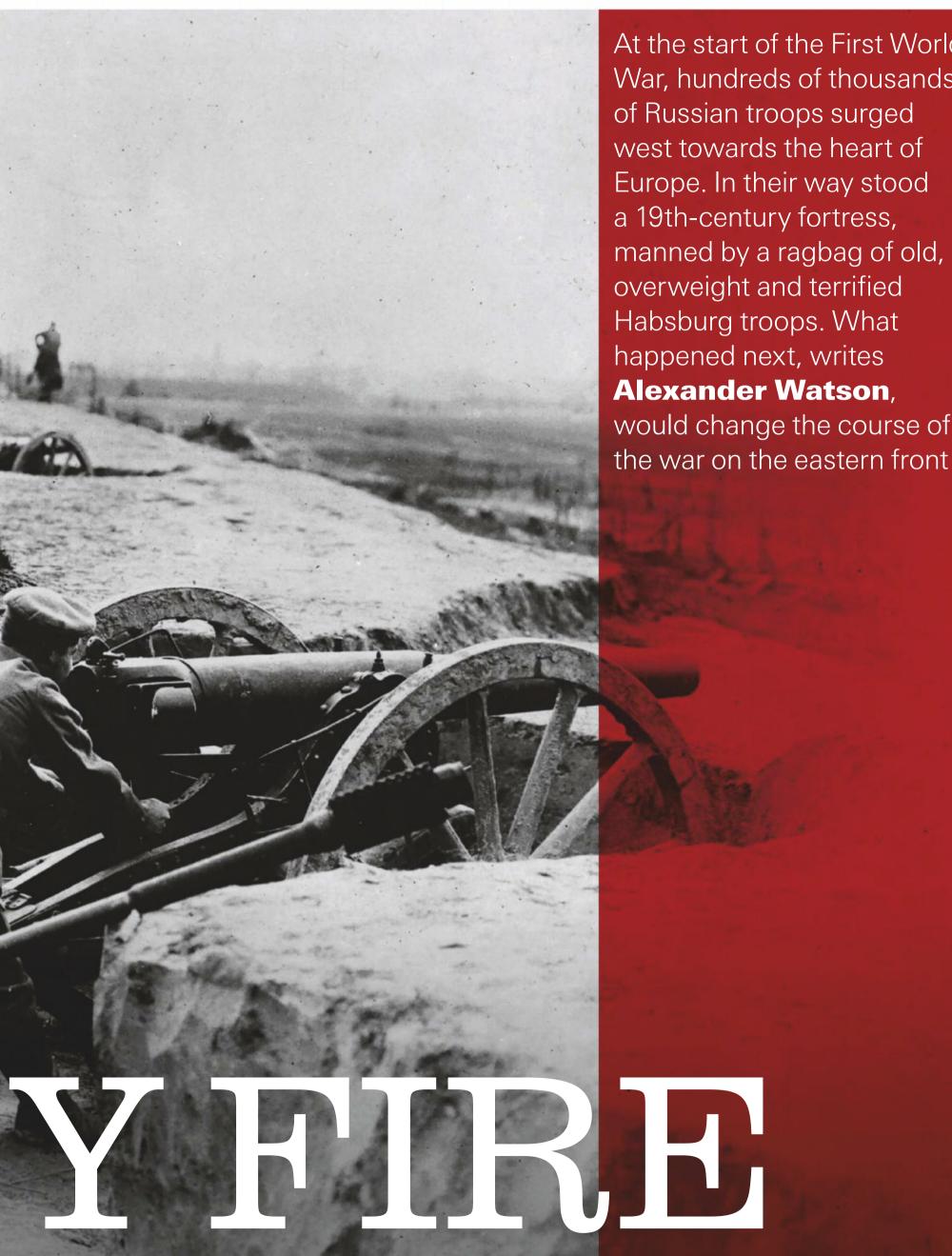






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At the start of the First World War, hundreds of thousands of Russian troops surged west towards the heart of Europe. In their way stood a 19th-century fortress, manned by a ragbag of old, overweight and terrified Habsburg troops. What happened next, writes **Alexander Watson**, would change the course of

he invaders "swept away everything that was in their path: affluence and order, peace and civilisation", wrote one horrified Pole as a Russian army surged west in September 1914. "Their way was marked by destruction and despoilment, arson and rape."

In the opening months of the First World War, the Russian and Habsburg armies fought immense and bloody battles to determine the future of eastern Europe. Their main arena was the Habsburg empire's borderland of Galicia, a region today in southern Poland and western Ukraine. At the start of September 1914, after frantic manoeuvring and fierce fighting, Galicia's capital Lemberg (today Lviv) fell. Habsburg forces fled in headlong retreat. The Russians followed slowly. The tsarist military leadership, nationalistic and virulently anti-Semitic, hoped not only to conquer but also to cleanse the region. As the words of the Polish witness attest, the consequences for the inhabitants of their newly conquered territory were often cataclysmic.

#### **Broken regiments**

The Habsburg fortress of Przemyśl, standing in the centre of Galicia, became at this moment of military crisis the decisive point on the eastern front. As Przemyśl's residents despairingly watched their field army's broken regiments streaming west through their city, the fortress garrison prepared for action. The fortress's defences were outmoded. Its soldiers were middle-aged reservists drawn from across central Europe, whose military training was nearly two decades in the past. Yet that disastrous autumn, they alone barred the Russians' way. On their desperate resistance hung the fate of the Habsburg empire.

The Habsburgs' most important bastion in the east was built at Przemyśl for good reason. The city sat in the Carpathian foothills, the last high ground before the Russian frontier 30 miles to the north. It blocked access to the passes south over the

One Habsburg lieutenant labelled the soldiers defending Przemyśl "well-past-theirprime fatties" Carpathian mountains into Hungary. Crucially, it also straddled and controlled the empire's main northerly east-west railway line, possession of which would be essential for Russian invaders seeking to break into the heart of the Habsburg empire.

The fortress's construction began in the 1870s, at a time of rocky relations with Russia. Up to 1906, when funding was largely cut off, the cash-strapped empire spent the enormous sum of 32 million crowns on it around £158m in today's money. In and around the city, barracks, storehouses, headquarters, a hospital, a radio station, an airfield and a manoeuvre ground were erected. So too were imposing defences. On hills outside the city centre stood, by 1914, a ring of 17 main and 18 smaller intermediate or forward forts. After war's outbreak, trenches were hurriedly dug between the forts, creating a continuous defensive perimeter 30 miles in circumference.

Nevertheless, by 1914 the fortress was obsolete. The Habsburg High Command had ceased to invest, and regarded it as a glorified military warehouse. The forts' designs had been overtaken by rapid advances in artillery technology. Their high profiles made them sitting ducks for long-range guns, and their brick and concrete was mostly too thin to withstand modern siege ordinance. Much of their armament was ancient.

The fortress's 130,000-strong garrison also inspired no confidence. Soldiers from across the astonishingly diverse empire – Austrian Germans, Hungarians, Poles, Ukrainians, Romanians, Slovaks, Czechs, Serbs and Italians – served together in September 1914, making Przemyśl less a bulwark than a Babel. The backbone of the defence were four Landsturm Brigades, poorly armed and filled with the empire's oldest conscripts, men aged 37–42 years old. There were few professional officers. Instead, these units were led by businessmen, academics and civil servants with reserve commissions. In the words of one lieutenant, worried about how his colleagues would fare against the Russians, they were "well-past-their-prime fatties".

The advancing army
– commanded by

Russian general
Aleksei Brusilov
recognised the importance
of seizing Przemyśl

#### **WAR ON THE MOVE**

The fast-paced struggle for supremacy on the eastern front, 1914–17

In the summer of 1914, eastern Europe's fate hung on a razor's edge as the powers that ruled the region went to war, with Russia pitted against Germany and the Habsburg empire (Austria-Hungary). The battlefront stretched 600 miles, from Bukovina up to the Baltic.

The Russian army, numbering a colossal 3.5 million soldiers, concentrated on the front's flanks. In the north, 22 infantry and 11½ cavalry divisions – around 485,000 troops – invaded Germany. The defenders were few, just 11 divisions, but they quickly won a stunning victory at the battle of Tannenberg, smashing the invasion.

On the eastern front's southern flank, in and around the Habsburg province of Galicia, much larger forces deployed. There, 53½ Russian infantry and 18 cavalry divisions faced 37 Habsburg infantry divisions and 10 cavalry. After Habsburg strikes north into Russian-ruled Poland, the tsar's army invaded eastern Galicia, routing its enemy in early September. The fortress of Przemyśl stalled their advance.

Unlike the infamous western front, where static trench warfare soon prevailed, the eastern front was characterised by mobility and dramatic shifts of fortune. Though pushed back at the start of October 1914, one month later the Russian army again encircled Przemyśl. The fortress-city's siege – the longest of the First World War – lasted 181 days, before it capitulated through hunger in March 1915.

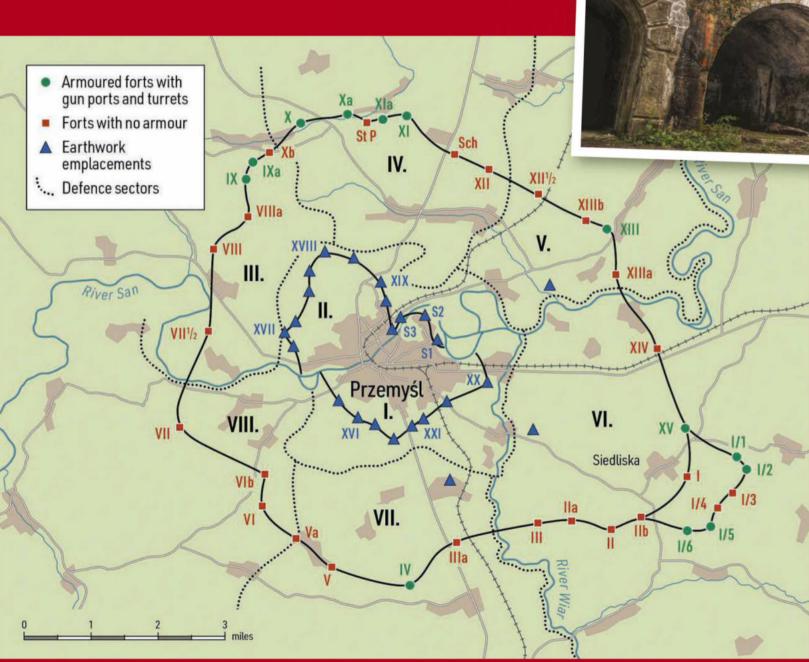
The Russians had little chance to savour their victory. That summer of 1915, the Germans counterattacked, liberating Przemyśl and overrunning Russian-ruled Poland. Although in mid-1916, General Brusilov – who had failed against Przemyśl in October 1914 – redeemed himself by beating the Habsburg army outside Lutsk, the Russians were approaching total exhaustion. Revolution flared in the spring of 1917. The tsar abdicated and his army collapsed, leaving Germany and its Habsburg ally dominating all eastern Europe.



**Tinder box** A map of the eastern front, as war broke out in August 1914. The conflict pitted Russia and its allies against Germany and the Habsburg empire (Austria-Hungary)



**Invading army** Russian troops enter Galicia's capital, Lemberg, during their 1914 offensive. "Their way was marked by arson and rape," wrote one observer



Ring of steel
The ruins of Przemyśl
fortress (above). As our
map (left) shows, in
1914 this Habsburg
bulwark against
Russian invasion
boasted a continuous
defensive perimeter 30
miles in circumference

General Aleksei Brusilov, Russia's finest soldier - reached the fortress in the second half of September. Cossack cavalry heralded its arrival. These warriors, mounted on agile steppe horses, were first sighted by garrison lookouts on the 17th. Infantry soon followed, lapping around the edges of the fortress. The last railway line into the city, running south, was cut on the 19th. By 23 September, Przemyśl was encircled.

While Stavka, the myopic Russian High Command, wished to screen the fortress and concentrate on a new offensive further north against Germany, Brusilov recognised its capture could have a decisive impact. However, the general had only limited forces for an assault on the fortress. He committed 483 artillery pieces, eight and a half infantry divisions, and a cavalry division – in all, around 150,000 soldiers. The force had no specialised siege artillery – a weapon the Russians had neglected to develop in peace.

#### A threat from the west

Brusilov's assault force would have to win quickly. There was little time for reconnaissance, and none for a lengthy bombardment. The Habsburg field army had retreated 90 miles to the west, but already by the end of September it had restored discipline and was refilling its ranks. It would soon return to battle and its resurgence would pose a grave threat, because Stavka had transferred much of Russian strength away from Galicia for its own northern offensive.

Nevertheless, Brusilov was supremely confident. Peacetime espionage had delivered into Russian hands detailed plans of the fortress's defences. Tsarist military intelligence assessed the forts to "belong to the realm of history". From deserters' testimony and their first clashes with the garrison, the attackers were also aware that the multi-ethnic Habsburg soldiers manning the defences were old, poorly trained and very frightened.

So feeble did the fortress appear that the Russians hoped it might not even be necessary to fight. On 2 October, an emissary was dispatched bearing a letter for the fortress commander, Lieutenant-General Hermann Kusmanek von Burgneustädten. "Fortune has abandoned the Austrian army," it warned. "Any help for you from outside [is] impossible. To avoid needless bloodshed... now is the time to propose that your excellency surrender the fortress."

For two days after Kusmanek had rejected the Russians' parley, all remained quiet. Then, during the night of 4–5 October, alerts that the enemy was approaching suddenly started to flood in from the perimeter.

#### The soldiers were already dead, their throats cut silently by Russian assault troops now creeping ever closer

The blockade army's plan of attack was to take the fortress from three sides. North of Przemyśl, around a third of the army was to conduct a diversionary operation. A small force in the south with around 6,000 infantryman acted as a flank guard for the main attack. The primary penetration was to be achieved against the fortress's south-east, where all the Russians' heaviest guns - 23 French-designed howitzers – were deployed, along with 16 medium artillery pieces, 232 field guns and 65 infantry battalions.

On 5 October, the first day of the assault, this main force in the south-east made stunning progress. Vindicating Brusilov's confidence, its troops captured all the fortress's forward positions in the sector. The forts' ancient artillery was impotent. Only a decade earlier, the Russian army had fought a modern war against Japan, and the experience had instilled a healthy respect for firepower. Its green-clad assault troops presented no good target. They moved rapidly, trickling forward in small groups and then quickly digging in. By evening, they had entrenched just a mile from the forts.

The following day, 6 October, was a day of bombardment. On the south-eastern front, the Russians' heavy guns attempted to batter the forts into submission, while lighter field artillery raked interval trenches with shrapnel. To Kusmanek's relief, the shellfire was ineffective against Przemyśl's fortifications. Even the heaviest projectiles failed to penetrate the forts.

But the Russian bombardment shook the garrison psychologically. Within the forts' claustrophobic confines, Landsturm soldiers huddled in fear at the piercing howl of incoming shellfire. "The building resounds and shudders down to its foundations," wrote one terrified officer, describing a direct hit. "Dust and gasses from the explosion... make the air heavy and suffocating." In the interval

trenches outside the forts, the shells' effect was even worse. Soldiers watched with horror as shrapnel eviscerated their comrades. "Lacerated human limbs... bloody shreds of flesh, intestine and brain parts" hung surreally from surrounding trees.

By the evening, Kusmanek



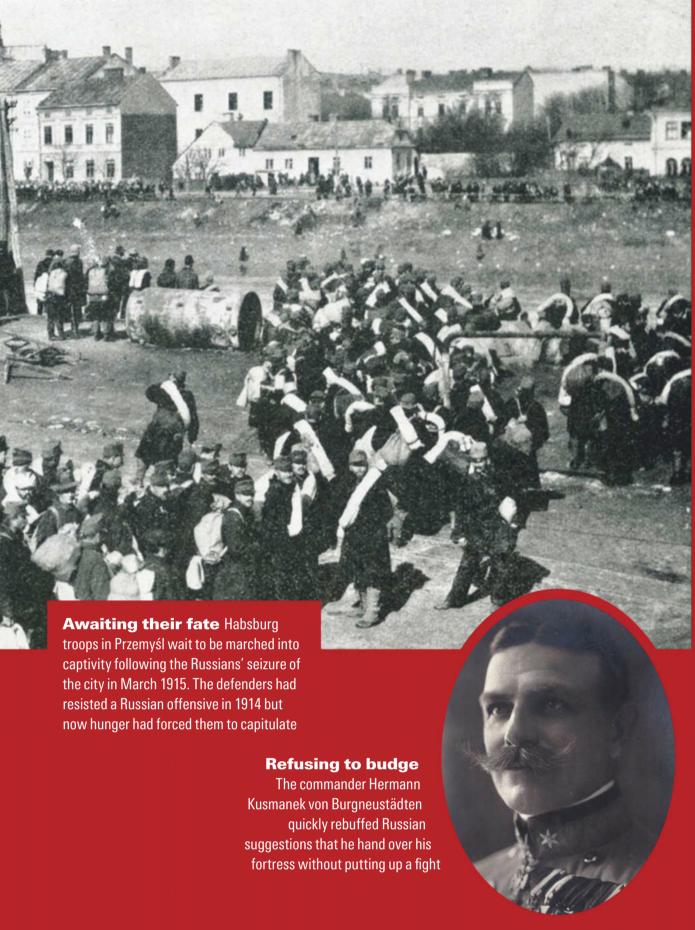
was certain that the Russians' main assault would come in the south-east. The fortress's defences were still intact. Its garrison, however, was severely demoralised. Senior officers feared the forts were under fire from 18 or 21cm siege artillery – calibres that would smash the old walls. The bombardment had triggered many nervous breakdowns. Even the soldiers who had endured were close to panic. A rumour spread that the Russians would soon break into Przemyśl, and "make goulash out of the inhabitants".

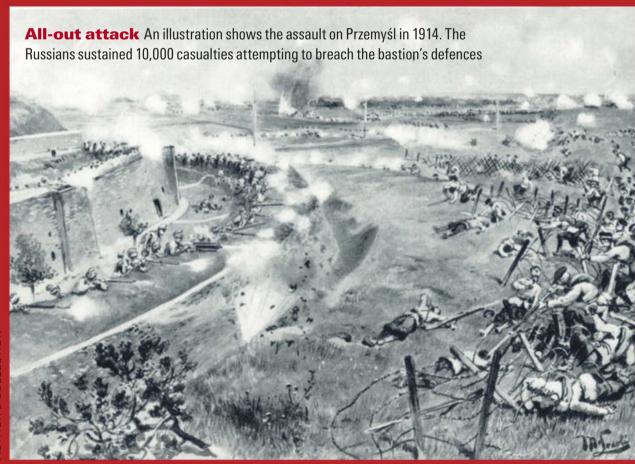
That same evening, the Russian command ordered the storming of the fortress perimeter. All units were to attack simultaneously at 2 o'clock the following morning, 7 October, under cover of darkness. The fortress's defences had not been neutralised, but the blockade army's leadership could wait no longer. Intelligence had arrived warning that the Habsburg field army was on the move. The weak Russian screening forces in its path would not be able to stop it. At most, just 24 hours remained to capture Przemyśl.

The Russian command's attention was fixed on its main assault on the south-east of the fortress perimeter. The Russians' primary target was a crescent of six small forward forts in the middle of this sector, outside the village of Siedliska. The heavy artillery had bombarded these all day on 6 October, and, against the north of the crescent, the blockade army had deployed its best formation, the elite 19th Division. Its storm on the crescent's anorthernmost fort, Fort I/1, would produce northernmost fort, Fort I/1, would produce

#### **MORE FROM US**

Listen to Alexander Watson discuss the battle for Przemyśl fortress on our podcast at historyextra.com/ podcast





the major crisis of the day.

Fort I/1 had been built at the turn of the century. By Przemyśl's low standards, it was tough and modern. It was defended by a diverse Habsburg garrison. Forty-six young Austrian artillerymen from Vienna manned the fort's two turret guns and flanking cannon. The fort's 112 middle-aged Landsturm infantrymen hailed from Munkács in north-east Hungary. Most were Magyars, Ukrainians and Orthodox Jews. Divided by generation, language and upbringing, the gunners from the imperial metropolis and the foot soldiers from the Hungarian backwater did not get on.

#### The silent enemy

By the small hours of 7 October, Fort I/1's garrison was exhausted. On the fort's forward wall, sentries dozed in darkness. The fort's searchlight for illuminating the forward terrain had been smashed by shellfire, but the men felt safe, believing there to be a friendly listening post ahead, beyond the fort's ditch and barbed wire. In fact, those soldiers were already dead, their throats cut silently by Russian assault troops now creeping up the fort's glacis.

Shortly after 3am, the Russians switched on a powerful searchlight and a bombardment suddenly came crashing down, dazzling and deafening the infantry on Fort I/1's wall. The 19th Division's assault troops rushed the fort's protective ditch. They threw a bridge over and stormed onto the wall. There was a melee, but the Munkács Landsturm stood no chance. The survivors retreated into the fort, barricading its iron door.

Inside, there was panic. The senior artillery officer, the only professional soldier in Fort I/1, had collapsed with a nervous breakdown. "Oh my God... Oh my God..." he groaned, over and over. Without his orders, the fort's artillery was silent. The Viennese gunners had done nothing to support their Hungarian comrades. With Russians on the roof and in the courtyard, a few brave soldiers manned loopholes to try to keep the enemy away from the doors. Everyone else cowered in suspense.

It was now around 5am. The Russians were on the verge of a spectacular victory. They had crossed no-man's land, dodging minefields and cutting through barbed wire. They had overcome Fort I/1's ditch and chased its defenders from their firing positions. Yet, as the assault troops realised with shock, they had no means of breaking into the fort. The guncotton they had brought to blow in the doors was wet. It hissed and fizzled, but it would not explode.

The standoff was broken when, at 7.30am, Hungarian reinforcements came to Fort I/1's





Fallen icon German soldiers amid the rubble of
Przemyśl fortress, having captured it from Russian forces in June
1915. The starving Habsburg garrison had blown up all the forts in
March, just before surrendering to the Russians

rescue. Hurrying from the flanks, they picked off the enemy on the roof and then broke into the courtyard. Hand-to-hand fighting began, but was abruptly abandoned when the Russian artillery (trying to repel the Hungarians) and Habsburg gunners (who believed the fort had fallen to the enemy) both opened fire. Soldiers in blue and green beat frantically on the fort's door to escape the shellfire, but the frightened garrison was taking no chances. Only after much cursing were the heavy beams removed and the Hungarians allowed in, along with 149 Russian prisoners. The relief was messy, but Fort I/1 was free.

#### **Disciplined fighters**

The Russians' failure to seize Fort I/1 ended their best chance of breaking the defensive perimeter and capturing the fortress of Przemyśl. Nowhere else did their offensive come so close to success. Now, they were out of time. The Habsburg field army was dangerously close. Over the following 24 hours, the blockade army disengaged. When garrison troops peered over no-man's land at dawn on 9 October, they found it empty. The first

The fortress's resistance gave the dissolving Habsburg army breathing space to rest, regroup and return to battle

cavalry patrol from the Habsburg field army arrived in the west of the perimeter at midday. Soon, thousands of Habsburg soldiers were again marching through the city, this time eastward and, once more, as an organised, disciplined fighting force.

The fortress's resistance had a profound effect on the war in eastern Europe. Most importantly, it won desperately needed respite for the dissolving Habsburg field army, permitting the army to rest, regroup and then return to battle. By forcing the

Russians to lap around, and by denying them control of the main transport artery in Galicia, the fortress had significantly slowed their advance. It had also pinned well over 100,000 Russian troops, who otherwise would have been beating their way westwards. Some 10,000 had died or were injured storming the fortress. The defenders' casualties were, by contrast, light: 1,885, of whom barely over 300 were killed.

The whole Habsburg empire had cause to be grateful to the fortress. The siege became a major propaganda coup for the hard-pressed state, for it proved that the Russian steamroller could be halted. The garrison was celebrated as an icon of imperial heroism. Newspapers waxed lyrical about the old soldiers' "glorious success" and the "grave peril" they had averted. In Galicia, too, Polish, Ukrainian and especially Jewish inhabitants could feel thankful. The tsar's ambition of conquering the region to create a "Great Russia to the Carpathians" had been stalled.

Yet the war continued. Przemyśl would be encircled again in November. A brutal attritional siege opened, with more fighting, the aerial bombing of the city and the starvation of its inhabitants. Outside the walls, anti-Semitic Russian invaders persecuted and drove out the land's Jews. When in March 1915 the garrison capitulated, the fortress was largely destroyed. The Russians' victory would be fleeting, but the legacy of violence and hatred lived on, and within decades, pitiless ideological conflict would again ravage east-central Europe's 'Bloodlands'.

Alexander Watson is professor of history at Goldsmiths, University of London, and a winner of the Wolfson History Prize. His new book, *The Fortress: The Great Siege of Przemysl*, was published by Allen Lane in October

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# How to build ademocracy (Athenian-style)

Two-and-a-half millennia ago, the citizens of Athens of today's political systems. **Paul Cartledge** offers eight tips for those wishing to pioneered a form of government that inspired many history's purest forms of people-power



#### Select your site

The mighty Acropolis provided the firmest of foundations for Athenian people-power

"Democracy," as Winston Churchill famously observed, "is the worst form of government except for all those other forms that have been tried." And if any city can lay claim to being the cradle of this 'least imperfect' method of ordering society, then it is surely Athens.

The Greek capital is, after all, where a form of democracy worthy of the name was first invented, where it was taken furthest, and where it lasted longest in the ancient world.

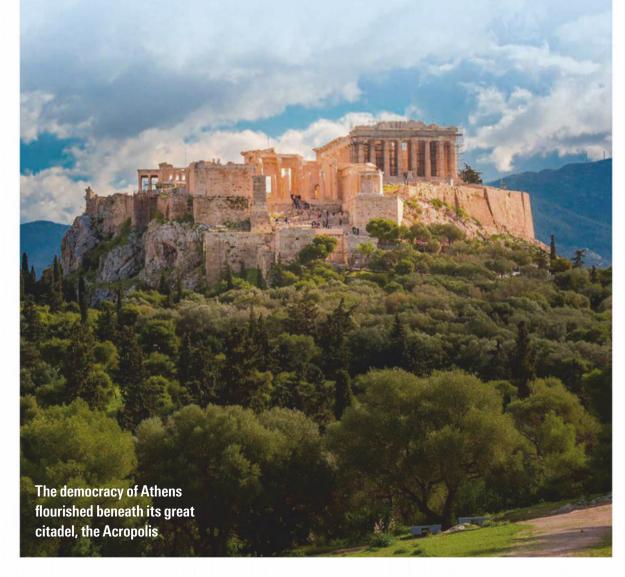
And that democracy was very much the product of Athens' location. Two-and-a-half millennia ago, Athens was the largest town in a region known as Attica, a pocket of south-east Greece that was roughly the size of modern-day Luxembourg. Attica was blessed with two extraordinary natural resources: silver-bearing lead deposits (a "treasure of the earth", as the playwright Aeschylus called them) and good harbours.

But towering over all those – literally as well as metaphorically – was the

sacred Acropolis or 'High-City', bang dead centre in the main town of Athens. If you're going to build a democracy, build it on and around such a mighty rock. The needs of defence as well as sanctity and religious worship were well served at this 150-metre-high citadel.

Alongside, and within eyeshot, was the Pnyx Hill. This was where the democratic Assembly met, in the open air, in almost all weathers (rain and snow *did* stop play), and where statesmen such as Pericles and Demosthenes addressed the masses.

But the Pnyx was not the Athenians' original place of civic assembly: that was the Agora at the foot of the Acropolis, a place of private commerce and public politics. Here was where the offices of all the city's main officials were located, but also where you could buy perfume – or a slave. And, finally, into the slopes of the Acropolis was built the Theatre of Dionysus, a political as well as a religious and dramatic space.



#### STEP 2

# Choose your people

To survive, Athenian democracy had to walk a tightrope between the elite and the masses

'Democracy' is a loan word, borrowed from ancient Greek *demokratia*. This is a portmanteau term, composed of two parts: *demos* and *kratos*. *Kratos* is unambiguous: meaning 'power'. But the meaning of *demos* is less certain. On the one hand, it means 'the people', as in all the people who went to make up the *polis* or citizen-state of the Athenians. On the other hand, *demos* could also be used to mean 'masses', the poor majority of the Athenian citizen body. If you were not a democrat, you perhaps didn't mind the first meaning of *demos*. But the chances are you hated the second – to you, that could mean mob rule.

In Athens, all free men over the age of 18 were entitled to vote – that included rich and poor. At its maximum, the Athenian citizen body may have numbered as many as 50,000–60,000, but 30,000 was more usual. To us that's minuscule, but most citizen-bodies in the ancient Greek world numbered between 500 and 2,000 people, making Athens a giant outlier.

The great political analyst Aristotle opined that democracy was always, by definition, the rule of the poor, whereas oligarchy was essentially the rule of the rich. Plato, Aristotle's teacher, said that a city governed by an oligarchy was really two cities: the city of the rich set in dead opposition to the city of the poor. (By the way, neither Aristotle nor Plato was a democrat.)

For the most part, the Athenians cleverly avoided outright class warfare in their democracy. But the system wasn't fail-safe: democracy was overthrown twice in periods of extreme tension caused by failure in war.

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#### Be lucky in your founder

In Cleisthenes, Athens had a statesman with the foresight and courage to institute a radical new political system

The Athenians were greedy in this respect: they claimed not one, but three founders, each contributing something different, each foresighted and far-sighted. One of them, Theseus, was mythical: to him Athenians attributed the political unification of Attica under Athens as capital. The second founder, the lawyer, statesman and poet Solon (c630–c560 BC), was a real human being – one who dominated Athenian politics in the early sixth century (see step 4). But only the third, Cleisthenes (c570–c508 BC), can be called the true founder of the first democracy.

Cleisthenes was born an aristocrat, and his maternal grandfather was a foreign tyrant, but he threw in his lot with far-reaching, democratic political reform. His path to power was far from smooth – he twice went into exile, the second time after being forced out of Athens by the Spartan king Cleomenes. But he soon returned at the invitation of the people and, in c508 BC, implemented a reform package that would introduce democracy to the city-state.

Cleisthenes' reforms saw Athens' political map being redrawn, with the deme – village, parish, ward, of which there were about 140 scattered through Attica – at its centre. It was by being registered in your local deme at the age of 18 that you became an Athenian citizen in the first place. (Women were also citizens, but politically disempowered, as were minors, foreigners and slaves.)

By a complex system of cross-regional division and addition, Athenians found themselves grouped into 10 'tribes'. These new tribal groupings were the basis of the Council of 500, which consisted of 50 men from each of the 10 tribes, who served for one year. The Council could issue decrees

on its own but its main function was to prepare the agenda for meetings of the Assembly (for more on this, see step 6).

Cleisthenes rather strangely disappears from the scene straightaway; perhaps he died. But the fruits of his reforms were soon borne, in both political and cultural change at home, and military success abroad.

> He was the grandson of a tyrant, but that didn't stop Cleisthenes founding the world's first democracy

#### STEP 4

#### Seize your moment

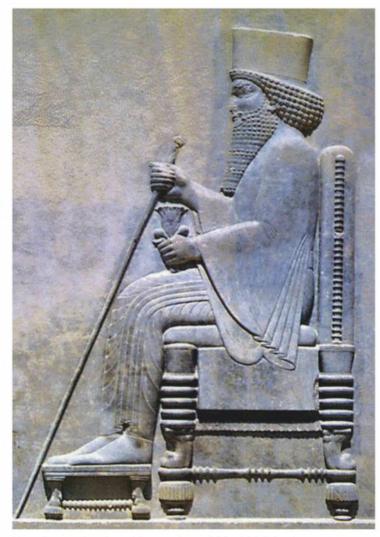
The threat of invasion supercharged Cleisthenes' democratic reforms

For Cleisthenes, timing was everything. And that time arrived in the late sixth century BC, when long-term background conditions and more immediate events coalesced fruitfully. The favourable background conditions were provided by a raft of economic and social reforms pushed through by Solon at the start of the century. These made wealth rather than birth the principal foundation of political entitlement. They also improved the lot of many of Attica's poorest people and, in doing so, headed off the threat of revolution.

Following Solon, the tyrant Peisistratus and his son Hippias gave Athens political stability and economic prosperity over a 35-year period, partly by seeing that Solon's reforms were put into effect. But precisely because they ruled as tyrants, Peisistratus and Hippias also outlived their utility and acceptability. When Athens became a

democracy, thanks to the reforms sponsored by Cleisthenes, its ideological glue was a hostility to one-man, autocratic rule, and a privileging of freedom and equality for citizens.

But it was more immediate threats to Athenian security that gave Cleisthenes the red alert his democratic programme needed. The first threat came from the anti-democratic city-state of Sparta, which intervened twice in Athens' internal affairs: once to overthrow Hippias, the second time to try to install a different, pro-Spartan tyrant. A further contributing factor was the rising menace of the Persian empire to the east. When Hippias was forced into exile, where did he turn to try to secure his restoration? Persia, the ultimate autocracy. Persia and Sparta were thus bogeymen for the democratic Athenians, and so they remained for many years to come.



King Darius I, ruler of Persia from 522–486 BC, shown in a bas relief. The prospect of a Persian invasion convinced many Athenians of the merits of Cleisthenes' democratic reforms

# Pick your battles

Democracy brought the best out of Athens' warriors – as Persia discovered to its cost

The fledging democracy's very existence was threatened first by Sparta, then by its immediate Greek neighbours to the west (the Boeotians) and the east (the Euboeans). Those were easily dealt with. But Persia soon posed an even greater existential challenge.

Admittedly, this was partly of the Athenians' own making. Early in the 490s, Athens had sent help to the Greeks and non-Greeks of the Asiatic mainland who had risen in revolt against their Persian overlords. That revolt was crushed in 494, and four years later Athens had to face an invasion by sea launched by King Darius I of Persia.

The resulting battle of Marathon was a huge victory for the Athenians, ideologically, as well as militarily. As the historian Herodotus put it, it was the Athenians' devotion to political equality that had enabled them to



Part of a Roman-period sarcophagus relief showing Athens' Marathon victory – an ideological triumph

punch militarily above their weight – by bringing the most able statesmen and generals to the fore. The Athenians made a huge song-and-dance of their Marathon result. But even that was to be overshadowed by another victory, at sea this time, 10 years later.

To punish the Athenians, and turn mainland Greece into a European province of the Persian empire, Darius's son and successor, Xerxes, launched a massive amphibious expedition in 480 BC. Athens, including its Acropolis citadel, was laid waste

twice. But a crushing Greek victory in the naval battle off the islet of Salamis in September 480 more than made up for that, forcing Xerxes to withdraw to Asia with much of his army.

Moreover, the triumph at Salamis gave extra political power to the elbows of the Athenian masses. These were the poor citizens who had rowed the trireme warships to victory over the Persian fleet. Now the masses could demand – and receive – extra democratic powers (see step 8).

#### STEP 6

#### Let the citizens speak

Athenians could vote on anything from the price of grain to the war on tyranny

The wheels of Athenian democracy often started turning as soon as the sun rose. The day might start with a summons by a herald to a meeting of the Assembly on Pnyx Hill. All male citizens who wished to attend made sure they got there early enough to receive their modest allowance, compensating them for time away from their workplaces.

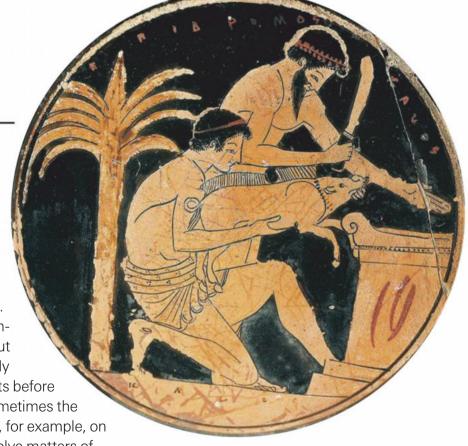
Proceedings would begin with a ritual purification of the space, involving the sacrifice of piglets and the scattering of their blood. Then the herald would start by inviting "anyone who wished to speak" on Item 1 of the prearranged Agenda to come up on to the bema (podium) and address what could be as many as 6,000 citizens seated before him. At the conclusion of the speeches, a vote would be registered by the raising of right hands. If the majority was clear, that was that. If not, then votes would be counted individually. This was direct, in-your-face democracy.

Such meetings were held as frequently as every 10 or so days, and routinely addressed

matters such as religion, defence and the grain supply. An Assembly might also be called in response to more urgent developments, such as a debate over a law against tyranny, or how best to resist the threat of a Persian invasion.

There was no 'second chamber' and no 'supreme court', but issues voted on in the Assembly might be reopened in the courts before a popular jury of hundreds. Sometimes the trial of an individual – Socrates, for example, on charges of impiety – might involve matters of great social, political and moral concern.

As Cleisthenes exemplifies, putting yourself forward as a policymaking politician could be an enormously rewarding undertaking. However after his trial, Socrates, who'd repeatedly criticised his fellow Athenians, was put to death – proof that entering Athens' political arena was far from a risk-free enterprise.



A piglet is sacrificed in a sixthcentury BC vase-painting. Athenians required the democratic space of the Pnyx to be cleansed in advance by piglets' blood

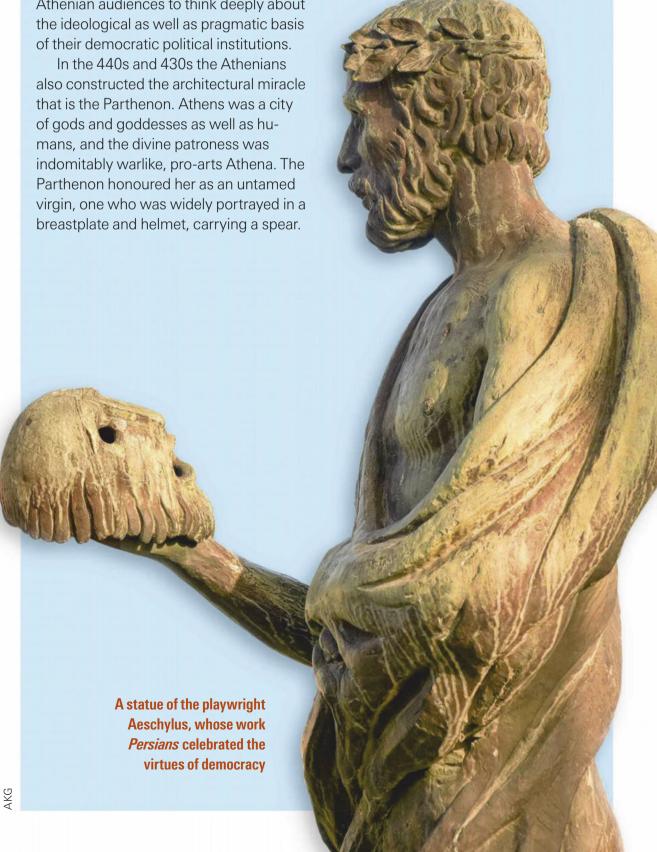
#### Allow artists to flourish

Political freedom breathed new life into Athenian theatre and architecture

Athenian democracy was a matter not only of formal political institutions but also of culture, including what we today call high culture. Tragic theatre and public architecture both flourished, and in peculiarly democratic forms. Within 75 years or so of democracy's foundation, Aeschylus had produced his *Persians* (a celebration of democracy as well as of the Salamis victory) and *Oresteia* trilogy; Sophocles had written his *Antigone* and *Oedipus Tyrannus*; and Euripides his *Medea*. All challenged the Athenian audiences to think deeply about the ideological as well as pragmatic basis of their democratic political institutions.

As such, she made for a suitable role model for citizen men struggling on two fronts against Sparta and Persia.

The Parthenon was the St Paul's Cathedral of an empire that the Athenians had, by now, constructed as a bulwark against Persian expansion. This multi-state Aegean alliance was a paltry affair by Persian standards, but it kept many Greek cities free, and offered a framework for widespread advances in democratic self-government.



#### STEP 8

# Don't be afraid of reform

Athens' democracy moved in a progressive direction, as autocracies prepared to pounce

Following the trauma of the Graeco-Persian Wars of 480–479, it was time for further internal reform, in a progressive, democratising direction. The men of the hour were Ephialtes and his junior adjutant, Pericles. Their key move was to strip any old, originally aristocratic institutions of their last vestiges of power and transfer that to the masses – to the people in both senses of demos. This was done by establishing people's jury courts, and staffing them with jurors selected by the democratic process of the random lottery. Such jurors were also judges, not only of criminality but of the law too, and they were paid from public funds to perform this public duty.

This system flourished until the Atheno-Peloponnesian War of 431–404, when Athens was defeated by its perennial foes Sparta and Persia. That wasn't the end of the story, however. A revived, if modified, Athenian democracy was destined for a further 80 or so years' existence, until that too was crushed by a foreign imperial power, Macedon.

This time defeat was terminal. With successive autocracies casting a long shadow over Greece, full-blown citizen people-power would not return to ancient Athens. But its legacy lives on in the 21st century. This extraordinary experiment did more than any other system to inspire our own western idea of democratic government – for good or ill. **H** 

**Paul Cartledge** is AG Leventis professor of Greek culture emeritus at the University of Cambridge and author of *Democracy: A Life* (OUP, 2018)

series Could an Ancient Athenian

Fix Britain?, on which Paul Cartledge
is a consultant, is due to begin on 11 November

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#### **GDANSK, POLAND**

First mentioned in 997 AD, this fabled city has a wealth of historical sights to explore. Start with the fairytale-like Malbork Castle, a UNESCO-designated medieval fortress, or head to Oliwa Cathedral, a 12th-century gem once home to the largest organ in Europe. Then back to the ship's Crooners Bar, where there's always someone tinkling the ivories.

#### **BRUGES, BELGIUM**

Cosmopolitan but full of old-world charm, this city has so many surprises. Visit the large marketplace, ancient guildhalls or medieval belfry that stands 270-feet high. And don't miss the 13th-century Church of Our Lady, home to Michelangelo's Madonna and Child sculpture – or the onboard lectures highlighting some of the world's great art masters.



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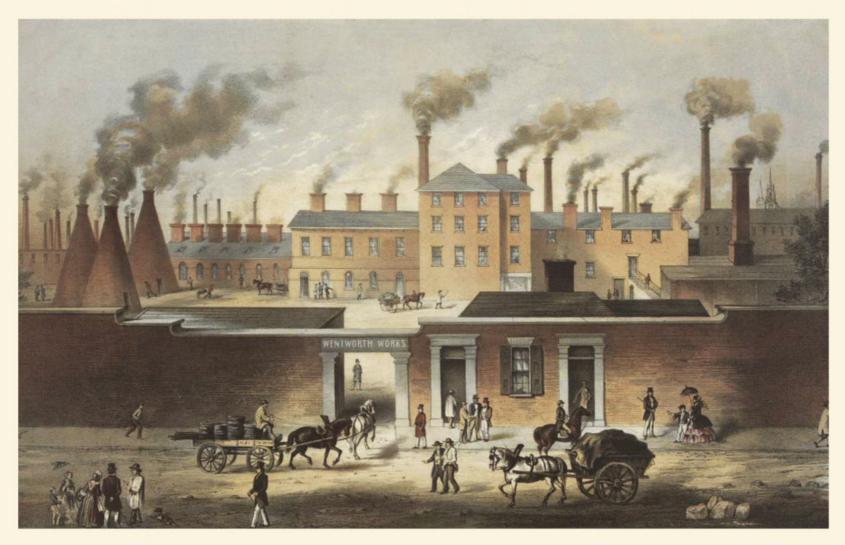
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#### THINK PIECE



**Showing its mettle** A c1860 depiction of Wentworth Works steel manufacturer in Sheffield.

Britain's industrial pre-eminence enabled a nation with only 2 per cent of the world's population to produce half the world's iron and steel

# Why Britain punched above its weight

What's truly remarkable about Britain's story is not its post-imperial 'decline' but the fact that it became a global superpower in the first place

**BY DAVID REYNOLDS** 

#### eversing Britain's 'decline' has been the avowed aim of pro-Brexit politicians. But in their view, decline is mostly a problem of the mind. Jacob Rees-Mogg, in a speech on 27 March 2018, blamed the Suez debacle

of 1956 for permanently undermining the nation's self-confidence, so that "the establishment, the elite, decided its job was to manage decline" and try to "soften the blow of descending downwards". That led, he said, to "the notion that it was Europe or bust", but instead the result, he added, was Europe and bust. That's why, insisted Rees-Mogg, Brexit was vital for national rejuvenation. The same line has been trumpeted by Boris Johnson as Britain's prime minister. What's needed is "optimism", greater "self-confidence", more of the "can-do spirit". In short, a failure of will, not lack of power, has got us into this mess. But willpower can get us out of it.

The debate about decline is not just a Brexit-era obsession. It is almost hardwired into any nation's rise to international prominence, thanks to the haunting image of imperial Rome. The historian Edward Gibbon, at the end of his classic *The History of the Decline and Fall of* the Roman Empire (1776–1788), called Rome's collapse "the greatest, perhaps, and most awful scene in the history of mankind".

In the 1900s – facing the challenges of imperial overstretch and mindful of Gibbon's narrative – Tory politician Joseph Chamberlain urged the consolidation of the empire as an economic bloc, in the hope of continuing "for generation after generation the strength, the power and the glory of the British race". Winston Churchill, inveighing in the 1930s against the idea of granting self-government to India, blamed this on "a disease of the will", asserting "we are victims of a nervous collapse, a morbid state of the mind". And Margaret Thatcher, during her very first election campaign in 1950, affirmed her "earnest desire to make Great Britain great again".

> However, terms like 'greatness' and 'decline' need to be unpacked. Today

the UK remains one of the wealthiest and most significant countries in the world. Although its place in global rankings is not comparable to the days of Victorian pre-eminence, that's not surprising, and no amount of willpower could have made a difference. In fact, the fixation with 'decline' - seen as real or psychological - misses the essential historical point: what's truly remarkable is the

Great Britain stood in the forefront of the great surges of European

story of Britain's 'rise'.

expansion that shaped the world between 1700 and 1900: commerce and conquest in the 18th century, industry and empire in the 19th. All these movements were intertwined with the lucrative Atlantic slave trade – half of all Africans carried into slavery during the 18th century were transported on British vessels - and the profits from that trade lubricated Britain's commercial and industrial revolutions.

The country's principal advantage was a relatively secure island base during what was still the age of seapower. Unlike rivals such as France and Prussia/Germany, which shared land borders with dangerous neighbours, Britain could shelter behind the English Channel – what Shakespeare called the country's "moat defensive".

Insularity did not guarantee immunity – in 1588, 1804 and 1940 invasion threats loomed – but it did free Britain from the necessity of a large standing army, the norm on the continent. The Royal Navy, however, was deemed essential, not just for defending the island but also because Britain was dependent on importing food and raw materials and needed to protect its seaborne commerce from peacetime privateers and wartime enemies.

ritain's insular position left it well-placed to capitalise on a series of great wars against France. Whereas French leaders from Louis XIV to Napoleon Bonaparte had to fight their primary battles on land against continental foes, Britain was able to divert more of its resources to the struggle for global empire. The Seven Years' War of 1756-63 left the British in control of most of North America and, although 13 colonies won their independence during the next world war of 1776-83, Britain held on to what became Canada and the British West Indies. During the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars of 1793–1815, the British had to weather invasion threats and periods of economic isolation, but in the end they gained total victory.

With the destruction of French seapower, Britain's fleet was now spread around the globe at key strategic points from Gibraltar to Singapore. It was also the world's main colonial power - paramount in India but also well entrenched in Australasia and Africa. Indeed it was the 'multiplier' effect of empire that made Britain great. At the start of the 20th century, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland had only 42 million people, whereas the population of the USA was 76 million and of tsarist Russia 133 million. When the inhabitants of Britain's overseas territories were included, however, the arithmetic looked

The coat of arms of **British Central Africa** in the 1890s. At its height, the British empire numbered 500 million subjects

different. At its peak after the Great War, the British empire covered nearly a quarter of the Earth's land surface and encompassed a similar proportion of global population, more than 500 million. France accounted for only 9 per cent of the Earth's land surface and 108 million of its people. During the Second World War, the UK mobilised 5.9 million people into the armed forces, while the 'white dominions' - Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa – raised nearly 2.5 million, and India more than 2 million.

Britain's ability to project power through a formidable navy and merchant fleet rested on the fact that it was also the world's first industrial nation. The country's initial manufacturing boom had been driven by the cotton trade. By 1830 raw cotton made up a fifth of Britain's net imports, and cotton goods accounted for half the value of its exports. The next growth sector was iron and steel, stimulated by the railway mania of the 1830s and 1840s and then sustained by British dominance in the finance and construction of railways around the world. By 1860 a country with only 2 per cent of the world's population was producing half the world's iron and steel and generating 40 per cent of world trade in manufactured goods. Britain boasted the largest GNP (Gross National Product) in the world, despite vast inequalities of wealth, and its population enjoyed the highest average per capita income.

Yet Britain's economic advantage was bound to be reduced once the process of industrialisation spread to countries with larger populations and greater resources – Germany in the late 19th century, America during the 20th century and China in the 21st. The United States and the People's Republic are both countries the size of a continent, benefiting from a huge workforce, abundant natural resources and a prodigious tariff-free internal market.

The predominant British response as others caught up economically was to consolidate existing advantages. That was Joseph Chamberlain's answer: build an imperial trading bloc to protect Britain's position in textiles and heavy industry. More enduring than his "imperial preference" was the country's naval-industrial complex – based on integrated steel, armaments and shipbuilding firms such as Vickers, Armstrong Whitworth and John Brown – as well as the Royal Dockyards, which later diversified into tanks, aircraft and missiles. The "warfare state", to use historian David Edgerton's term, matters as much in the history of modern Britain as the welfare state. And the network of global seaborne trade generated banks, insurance and other financial services built around sterling as a global currency. After the demise of the sterling area in the 1960s, the City of London adapted its skills to the Eurodollar market and the development of an immensely lucrative and lightly regulated offshore banking sector.

But not even these innovations could prevent the global balance of force shifting against Britain. International rivalries intensified from the 1860s (after a half-century of peace since 1815) with the scramble for Africa in the 1880s and 1890s and the attempted partition of China at the turn



Continental rift Prussian artillery bombards Paris during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71. The rise of Germany in the late 19th century – following a series of victories over rival European powers – threatened Britain's global pre-eminence

of the 20th century. Otto von Bismarck's new German empire - created by victories over Denmark, Austria and France – became the greatest military power on the continent. In 1871 Benjamin Disraeli warned that "the balance of power has been entirely destroyed and the country which suffers most... is England". Confronting the expansion of a militaristic Germany drew Britain into two world wars during the first half of the 20th century, which cost more than a million lives.

he turn of the 20th century also witnessed the eclipse of Britain's naval supremacy. In 1883 the Royal Navy boasted 38 battleships; the rest of the world had 40. In 1897, the balance had shifted to 62 against 96. By this time the Russian empire had expanded across Asia to the Pacific, generating friction along the borders of British India. And other new non-European powers were emerging. Japan had industrialised and turned its economic strength into military might, defeating Russia in a war triggered by rival imperial ambitions in north-east Asia in 1904–05.

The growth of these rivals exposed the fact that Britain was, effectively, "an artificial world power", to quote the German commentator Constantin Frantz in 1882, because its "territorial basis" was "just a European country" and its resources came from far-flung colonies connected to the home island only "through the threads of the fleet". Britain was not a vast continental empire like the USA or the USSR (after each had surmounted its crisis of civil war - in 1861-65 and 1917-22

66 Disraeli warned that "the balance of power has been entirely destroyed and the country which suffers most... is England"

#### THINK PIECE / Britain's global power



**Abject defeat** British soldiers surrender to the Japanese in Singapore, 1942. "Images of gawky officers in baggy shorts marching off to Japanese prison camps shattered the image of British racial superiority," says David Reynolds



**Outgunned** A Royal Navy warship in a poster from 1940, when Britain's armed forces would soon be stretched to breaking point

**Existential threat** Workers protest Tata



GETTY IMAGES/ BRIDGEMA

respectively). During the Second World War, the German and global challenges became intertwined, with devastating consequences for Britain. The fall of France within a month in 1940 left Hitler dominant across continental Europe; Britain's hopes of victory now depended on the United States. And the Nazi triumph emboldened Italy and Japan to jump into the war, obliging the Royal Navy to confront three foes when it had only enough seapower to deal with two.

Britain's imperial bluff was finally called in the winter of 1941–42. Pearl Harbor triggered a Japanese blitzkrieg across south-east Asia that undermined the credibility of the European empires. Images of gawky British officers in baggy shorts signing the surrender of Singapore and then marching off to Japanese prison camps were beamed around the world, shattering the image of racial superiority on which British power relied. And the panic offer of independence to India in the crisis of 1942 had to be honoured after the war – beginning the domino-like process of decolonisation.

The summer of 1940 – the heroic evacuation from Dunkirk and victory in the Battle of Britain – dominates Britain's standard national narrative of the Second World War, while the impact of the imperial disasters in 1941–42 has been largely ignored. Yet in the country's global history, 'Singapore' matters far more than 'Suez'.

Technologies of warfare were also changing. Britain's insularity counted for much less in the eras of airpower and then ballistic missiles. Hostile states could now vault over the Channel 'moat'. And in the atomic age, Britain lacked the means to repel, or even deter, aggressors. Hence its reliance on the postwar world's leading superpower, the United States, and on Washington's security umbrella in the form of the Atlantic alliance. The UK's so-called 'independent' nuclear deterrent depends on US missile systems – initially Polaris and latterly Trident.

one of this means that Britain is irrelevant in world affairs. To this day, it's the only European member of the Western Alliance, apart from France, to maintain a capacity for power-projection outside the Nato area. Although precise rankings ebb and flow, in 2017 it was the 10th-largest exporter and fifth-largest importer, and ranks among the top three in both inward and outward foreign investment. The result is a position in power and wealth that one might expect for a post-colonial state of its size, population and resources. And the country's history, culture and language constitute immense 'soft-power' assets.

But that's cold comfort if you're obsessed with the 'G' word, with a version of 'our island story' that features past greatness, without understanding how and why it came about. Especially if you fail to appreciate the role of the empire in Britain's historic wealth and power. From such perspectives, any feeling of being on the same level as countries that 'we' defeated in the past, especially

Germany, makes relative decline seem like abject humiliation.

Where might Brexit fit in this story? We don't know and it will take years to find out. Neither side in the 2016 referendum had any detailed plan for 'exiting' the EU. 'Leave' was a brilliant PR slogan but it did not address the complexity of extricating the country from an international organisation in which the UK has been entangled for nearly half a century. Brexit is not something that a leader can deliver like a parcel or a pizza. It will take years.

66 Britain now boasts a position in power and wealth that you might expect for a postcolonial state of its size, population and resources

And the 'G' word doesn't help. The Brexit mess since 2016 has left the UK divided (both Scotland and Northern Ireland voted to remain), with its self-belief dented and its global image for stability and common sense badly tarnished. A leader might be tempted into trying to "make Great Britain great again" through military muscle and diplomatic brinkmanship. But perhaps different definitions of national 'greatness' are needed in the 21st century.

ne driver of Brexit was a sense of alienation against the metropolitan elite. This reflected the dominance of London throughout Britain's global heyday, as the centre of government, finance, trade and high culture. And it was also testimony to the persistent neglect of economic diversification north of the Midlands, after Britain's staple industries – first textiles and coal, later steel and cars – were undermined by global competitors. Economic historian Jim Tomlinson has argued that 'deindustrialisation' not 'decline' is the most appropriate narrative framework for post-1945 British history.

Governments of both major parties have not seriously addressed this challenge. They didn't promote new forms of employment when towns dependent on coal, steel or textiles had their main industry closed down. They have failed to foster the skills needed for a flexible life of work, especially in the robot economy. And they haven't addressed England's 'devo-deficit', exposed by the flourishing of devolved governments in Scotland and Wales.

Brexit will do little to make Britain feel great again if politicians ignore the alienation that underlay the vote in 2016. And that requires a clearer, less clichéd view of where we've come from, so as to envision where we should be going. It means treating the past not as an excuse for nostalgia but as a spur to future action. Or, borrowing a Churchillian phrase, as "a springboard and not a sofa".

**David Reynolds** is professor of international history at the University of Cambridge. His latest book, *Island Stories: Britain and its History in the Age of Brexit*, has just been published by William Collins

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# G&A

A selection of historical **conundrums** answered by experts

# When did people first start brushing their teeth?

evidence tells us that oral hygiene is nothing new. Our forebears chewed sticks, or used toothpicks of wood or bone. Chinese people were using 'chewing sticks' from aromatic trees from around c1600 BC, and developed pig bristle toothbrushes in the Middle Ages. by the 1600s, some were imported to Europe, but were not widely used.

In Britain, Addis – established by William Addis in 1780 – is usually hailed as the world's first toothbrush manufacturing firm. At this time many Brits cleaned their teeth with cloths, sometimes using an astringent such as soot or crushed shell. William Addis had been imprisoned (for causing a riot in Spitalfields) and supposedly had his

lightbulb moment when watching a sweeping brush being used in the gaol.

Addis made his first toothbrush using a bone drilled with small holes, through which bristles were inserted, then sealed in. His first brushes were on sale by 1780, but they were expensive (the finest used badger, rather than pig, bristles). As such, whole families might share one.

By the 1850s, most well-to-do folk in Britain, Europe and North America were brushing their teeth. The habit percolated down the social ladder as mass-production became more efficient, advertising more persuasive – and dentists more insistent.

**Eugene Byrne**, author and journalist specialising in history



ILLUSTRATION BY GLEN MCBETH



A can of worms from c1948. Anglers' tins of wriggly live bait are believed to have inspired the popular metaphor

# Did anyone ever open a can of worms (literally)?

Fishermen once opened cans of worms regularly. Today, live bait for anglers is bought in plastic containers or Styrofoam cups. But in the first half of the 20th century, it came in sealed metal cans – cans with real, wriggling worms inside. Once the anglers reached their favourite fishing spots, they took off the can lids. That's when difficulties arose, as worms often made a bid for freedom.

References to this original meaning can be found in early 20th-century literature. In *Diane of the Green Van*, a 1914 novel by Leona Dalrymple, the heroine goes fishing but has no luck. "Thoroughly out of patience, Diane presently unjointed her rod, emptied the can of worms upon the bank, and returned to camp." It was in the 1950s that the phrase "opening a can of worms" began to be used as the metaphor we know today, meaning attempting to solve a problem only to inadvertently make it worse.

Nick Rennison, author and journalist

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#### Were shootouts and bank robberies really that common in the 'Wild West'?

>>> In films and literature, the 19th-century American frontier exists as an action-packed world of gunplay and gusto, a 'Wild West' where lawlessness and gun violence are endemic, courtesy of the Winchester rifle and the Colt '45 revolver. However, a look at historical reality finds a landscape that's rather different.

It is true that the cowtowns and mining shanties of the Old West had their moments. One Kansas newspaper declared that Dodge City (founded in the early 1870s) was a "synonym for all that is wild, reckless and violent" because of its rowdy railroad workers, cowpokes and 19 saloons. Nine people were killed by shootouts in the town's first year. Soon, though, fledgling communities, including Dodge, turned to gun ordinances (requiring weapons to be stashed before entering the town) and hired lawmen to keep the peace.

Guns were commonly owned, but were used mostly for frightening off coyotes. Many of them were pretty inaccurate and often caused more damage to the wielder than the target.

Organised heists did take place occasionally - but banks were often small, locally owned, and protected on each side by other buildings – making local citizens well placed to defend their money. The sheriff's office, likewise, was never far away: though Wyatt Earp spent most of his time as a lawman in Tombstone rounding up stray hogs and watching for chimney fires rather than thwarting bad guys. In fact, one reason that outlaws such as Jesse James and Butch Cassidy became so famous was because their activities were the exception rather than the rule.

**Karen R Jones**, professor of history at the University of Kent

#### DID YOU KNOW...?

#### **Imperial hair loss**

A balding Roman emperor wrote a manual on hair care. Domitian, who ruled from AD 81–96, was very sensitive about his receding hairline and wore wigs to hide it. According to the Roman historian Suetonius, author of The Twelve Caesars, "His baldness offended him so much that he took it as a personal insult if anyone else was slighted for it." Suetonius also recorded that Domitian published a pamphlet on hair care, in which he offered consolation to his fellow baldies.

#### **Paradise found?**

According to one 19th-century American clergyman, the garden of Eden was located in Wisconsin. In 1886, Methodist minister David Over Van Slyke published a pamphlet entitled Found at Last: The Veritable Garden of Eden. After a study of the book of Genesis and the local terrain, he had decided that Trempealeau, Wisconsin fit the bill. Few people agreed, but a statue of Van Slyke, clutching a Bible and an apple, now stands in Trempealeau.



#### **Height of passion**

On 17 June 1871, a couple were married at London's St Martin's-inthe-Fields whose combined height was more than 15 feet. The bride, Canadian Anna Haining Swan, stood at 7ft 11ins in her stockinged feet; the bridegroom, Martin Van Buren Bates, a veteran of the American Civil War, was the shorter of the two, at 7ft 7ins. Both were famous performers in HP Ingalls's circus troupe, then on a world tour, and had even appeared before Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace. **III** 

............ Nick Rennison, author and journalist

HOW MIRACULOUS WAS MIDWAY? The image of plucky American sailors slaying a Japanese Goliath has helped make the battle of Midway one of the most feted Allied victories of the Pacific War. But, asks **Evan Mawdsley**, was this clash really the giant-killing of popular perception?

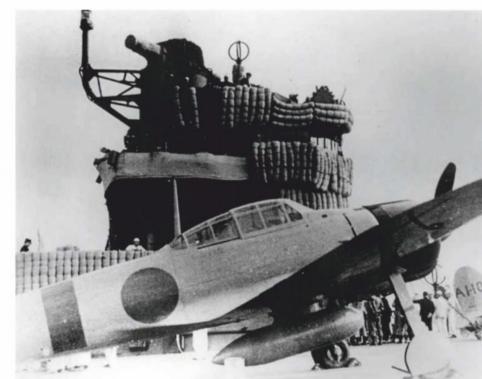
If Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku, commander-in-chief of Japan's Combined Fleet, felt confident of victory as the Midway operation got under way, then well he might. The preceding six months had witnessed a string of successes for his navy. On 7 December 1941, it had mounted a devastating surprise attack on the US naval base at Pearl Harbor, destroying two American battleships and badly damaging three more, and had followed this up by destroying the British fleet off Malaya. This one-two combination had helped Japanese armed forces gain effective control of south-east Asia and most of the Pacific Ocean. Malaya, Burma, the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies had all fallen under their control.

But there was a problem. The Japanese may have inflicted heavy losses on the Americans at Pearl Harbor, but they hadn't delivered a knock-out blow. Above all, no US carriers had been at the Hawaiian base on 7 December. The Midway operation was, then, Admiral Yamamoto's attempt to finish off the job his navy had started six months earlier, and win the Pacific War.

At the vanguard of the Japanese attack on



On the offensive Nagumo Chūichi (above), commander of the Mobile Force that spearheaded the attack on Midway. That force included two large aircraft carriers, including the Akagi (right), pictured in 1941



Midway was the *Kidō Butai* (Mobile Force), the aircraft-carrier task force that had spearheaded the assault on Pearl Harbor. This now boasted two large carriers, Akagi and Kaga, and two medium-sized ones, *Hiryū* and *Sōryū* – together carrying some 246 planes. In command was Vice Admiral Nagumo. "We left the Bungo Channel on 26 May with the overconfidence that if the Mobile Force takes the van[guard], it will take care of everything," wrote Nagumo's chief of staff. All the same, a second element, the so-called Main Body, set out across the foggy north Pacific two days later. Here Admiral Yamamoto himself flew his flag aboard the super-battleship Yamato.

#### Storming the atoll

If everything went to plan, the Japanese attack on Midway would begin with a series of lightning attacks, catching an unsuspecting American military off guard. The first phase would see Nagumo's planes put the Midway air base out of action courtesy of surprise air raids beginning on Thursday 4 June. These would pave the way for a

transport force of 5,000 men storming the atoll on the morning of the seventh. With the American fleet moored in its Pearl Harbor base four days' steaming away, it would – so Yamamoto reasoned – be utterly incapable of mounting a rapid response.

At first, aboard the Japanese flagships at sea, all seemed to be going to plan. US navy patrol planes from Midway did locate elements of the transport force coming from the west – some 700 miles out – on the morning of the 3 June. But Nagumo's carriers kept safely hidden. Then, after a high-speed approach on the night of the 3rd, his four ships started launching 121 aircraft - half their total strength - against Midway. At the same time, Japanese planes began to scout the perimeter around the Mobile Force; their task was to confirm that, as expected, no enemy ships were lurking nearby.

When the air armada reached Midway at 06.30 on 4 June, defending American planes soon fell to the veteran Japanese fighter pilots.

But the airfield was not put out of action, and

But the airfield was not put out of action, and the formation leader radioed the *Akagi* with a code message urging a second strike: "KAWA

#### TIMELINE The countdown to Midway

#### **7 December 1941**

Carriers of the Mobile Force (Kidō Butai) of the Japanese Combined Fleet, under Admiral Nagumo, launch a surprise attack on Pearl **Harbor** in the Hawaiian Islands. American losses include two battleships sunk, and three badly damaged. The following day, US president Franklin D Roosevelt declares war on Japan.

#### **20 January 1942**

The Mobile Force raids Rabaul, New Guinea, enabling the Japanese to establish a major base north-east of Australia.

#### **19 February**

The Mobile Force raids Darwin, northern Australia, supporting the final Japanese conquest of the Dutch East Indies.

#### 3-5 April

The Japanese Naval **General Staff approves Admiral Yamamoto** Isoroku's plan to invade Midway Island The aim is to lure the

> American fleet out for a decisive battle, and to destroy it.

> > **Admiral Yamamoto, the** architect of Japan's attack on Midway

#### 5–8 April

The Mobile Force raids Ceylon (Sri Lanka), sinking a British aircraft carrier and two cruisers.





Ocean – as our map shows. But it was at Midway that they planned to secure a decisive victory over the Americans

KAWA KAWA 0700." A quarter of an hour later, Admiral Nagumo concurred. He had a reserve of aircraft (half his total strength) equipped with bombs and torpedoes, ready for the unlikely event that enemy ships were encountered. Now they were ordered to rearm with ground-attack bombs for a second strike on the atoll.

It was at this moment, though, that Nagumo began to lose control of events. At 07.40 a search plane assigned to patrol due east of the Mobile Force suddenly relayed an alarming message: "Sight what appears to be 10 enemy surface units, in position bearing 10 degrees distance 240 miles from Midway." This was 200 miles to the east in an area of sea supposed to be empty of all American vessels. An early encounter with the enemy fleet, once an unlikely possibility, now loomed as a real threat. Within 30 minutes, the search plane had even worse news for Nagumo: the enemy force included a carrier.

In launching his attack on Midway,

#### THE JAPANESE **SOUGHT TO LURE** THE US NAVY INTO A BATTLE THAT **WOULD WIN THE PACIFIC WAR**

Yamamoto had sought to lure the Americans into a trap. But, in fact, it was the Japanese fleet that was steaming into an ambush. For, by 25 May, American codebreakers had cracked the radio messages detailing Yamamoto's plans for the Midway operation. As a result, the Americans knew Japanese objectives, the identities of most of the ships involved in the attack, and their departure dates.

And so, while Yamamoto believed that the two American carrier task forces were holed up in their Pearl Harbor base four days away, they were instead in position north of Midway, ready to spring a trap. "The situation is developing as expected," Admiral Chester Nimitz, in overall command of all operations, reassured his senior admirals late on the eve of the battle. "Carriers, our most important objective, should soon be located. Tomorrow may be the day you can give them the works."

#### **Dodging torpedoes**

As the American fleet closed in, bombers from the Midway air base launched an attack on the Mobile Force. The attackers, a motley collection of US army, navy and marine bombers, met heavy opposition from the fighters of the Japanese combat air patrol (CAP) over the Mobile Fleet. They failed to achieve any hits, but the ships under attack had to manoeuvre violently to dodge torpedoes and bombs. This, coupled with the need to launch and land CAP fighters, meant that the Japanese were unable to rearm the reserve force yet again, and to send it off – this time against the recently sighted American ships.

At about 09.20, a new American air attack on the Mobile Force began. This time the attackers were torpedo planes, not from Midway but from the shadowy fleet to the east. Slow and forced to fly at low altitude, the US planes were all but wiped out before they'd achieved any hits. Still, Nagumo was unable to launch his strike force.

If the first two waves of American air attacks inflicted little damage on the Japanese fleet, the same couldn't be said for the third. Shortly after being sighted by Japanese lookouts at 10.22, squadrons of SBD 'Dauntless' dive bombers began targeting the enemy carriers below; what they did next would change the course of the battle. An American

#### 18 April

BATTLEFIELD DESIGN/GETTY IMAGES

**US Army bombers raid** Tokyo and other Japanese cities. They are launched from carrier Hornet.



#### 7-8 May

**Battle of the Coral Sea** between Japanese and American carriers in the South Pacific. An Allied fleet, alerted by codebreaking, blocks the invasion of Port Moresby in New Guinea. Each side loses a carrier, and two of the Mobile Force's carriers are unable to take part in the Midway expedition.

#### **20 May**

American codebreakers tell Admiral Nimitz that a major operation is intended against Midway, giving him details of most forces involved and timing.

#### 26-28 May

Most of the Combined Fleet leaves Japan for the operations at Midway and in the Aleutian Islands (south-west of Alaska).

#### 3 June

Two Japanese carriers raid **Dutch Harbor in the** Aleutians.

#### 4 June

The battle of Midway. American carriers ambush the Mobile Force north of Midway Island, preventing an invasion and destroying the Mobile Force. Carrier Yorktown is damaged and sinks on 7 June.



A Japanese plane shot down in the battle of the Coral Sea

fighter pilot escorting the torpedo planes later described the scene: "Then I saw this glint in the sun and it looked just like a beautiful silver waterfall; these dive bombers coming down. [The defending Japanese fighters] weren't anywhere near the altitude of the dive bombers were. I'd never seen such superb dive bombing."

The four Japanese carriers were some distance from one another, but the Dauntless bombs hit *Kaga*, *Akagi*, and *Sōryū* in rapid succession. In their hangar decks, planes, fuel and unsecured bombs and other weaponry made the big ships firetraps. None of them sank immediately, but they were quickly ablaze, incapable of operating planes. One of the senior air staff officers aboard the Akagi recalled the carnage: "Smoke from the burning hangar gushed through passageways and into the bridge and ready room... Climbing back to the bridge I could see that *Kaga* and *Sōryū* had also been hit and were giving off heavy columns of black smoke. The scene was horrible to behold." The *Sōryū* crew began to abandon ship within 20 minutes. At 10.47, Nagumo and his staff left the burning *Akagi*.

The American ambush fleet was divided into two groups: Rear Admiral Spruance's Task Force (TF) 16, with carriers *Enterprise* and Hornet, and Rear Admiral Fletcher's Task Force 17, with Yorktown. At about 12.30, and again at 14.30, *Yorktown* was seriously damaged by dive bombers and torpedo bombers launched from *Hiryū*, and would sink on Sunday 7 June. *Hiryū* was herself wrecked by another American attack in the late afternoon of 4 June, and sank during the night. But these later exchanges did little to alter the outcome of the battle. By the time *Hiryū* disappeared beneath the waves, Yamamoto had accepted that his decisive, war-winning clash had ended in defeat, and had instead set course with his fleet back to Japan. As his chief of staff noted in his diary: "We are now forced to do our utmost to cope with the worst case. This should be kept in mind as a lesson showing that war is not predictable."

#### Terrible odds?

Seventy-seven years after Admiral Yamamoto's battered fleet limped back to Japan, the battle of Midway remains one of the most celebrated American victories of the Second World War. Yet in some ways, it is also one of the most misunderstood: just as the Japanese carriers fell prey to Dauntless dive bombers in the waters of the Pacific, so



All but wiped out TBD-1 torpedo bombers on the USS Enterprise prepare to attack Japanese aircraft carriers at Midway. Ten of the 14 aircraft involved in the operation would be destroyed

#### **PLANES, FUEL, UNSECURED BOMBS AND OTHER WEAPONRY TURNED** THE JAPANESE SHIPS **INTO FIRETRAPS**

modern perceptions of this naval clash have succumbed to myth.

Among the most prevalent of these misconceptions is the assertion that the US Pacific Fleet defied terrible odds to defeat an overwhelming enemy. Classic histories of the battle – with titles such as *Incredible Victory* and Miracle at Midway – have merely fed this perception. The historian Samuel Eliot Morison perhaps summed up this school of thought best when he described the American Pacific fleet as "a David to Yamamoto's Goliath".

But this was simply not the case, at least as far as the two fleets engaged in the main battle north-west of Midway were concerned.

The four Japanese carriers in the Mobile Force were only slightly superior to the three (larger) American carriers; Admiral Nagumo had 246 carrier

> planes at his disposal, compared to the 233 available to the US fleet. The Americans also had

Admiral Chester Nimitz, commander of the **US Pacific fleet** 

most modern carriers, to the South Pacific. There they suffered ship damage and aircraft

them unavailable at Midway.

#### A lack of firepower

More questions over Japanese decision-making are raised by the fact that the Midway assault was timed to coincide with another major Japanese operation – against American islands in the Aleutians, south-west of Alaska so denying Admiral Nagumo's spearhead more valuable firepower. Japanese intelligence about American activity during the battle was also badly co-ordinated, exemplified by Yamamoto's failure to share critical information with Nagumo.

the advantage of 99 combat aircraft based at

divided their attention between Midway, and

According to the 'Miracle at Midway'

myth, it wasn't just the size of the Japanese

fleet that made it such a formidable foe, but

the quality of its leaders. One of the masterminds behind the attack on Pearl Harbor,

Admiral Yamamoto has been widely por-

trayed as a gifted fleet commander. But many

of his decisions before and during the battle

when he sent the *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku*, his

of Midway suggest otherwise. In May, he

allowed the Mobile Force to be dispersed

loss in the battle of the Coral Sea, making

Midway itself, while the Japanese fatally

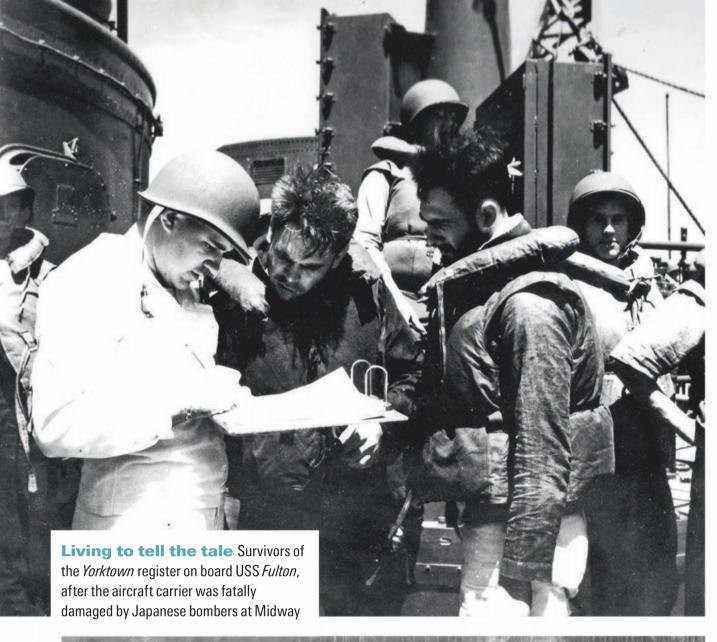
a possible threat from US carriers.

Another myth that stalks popular percep-

tions of the battle of Midway is that the Americans simply got lucky. True, weather and breakdowns affected Japanese scout planes. The Americans, with a hastily organised strike delivered at long range, were undoubtedly fortunate that dive bombers from different carriers  $\frac{\overline{c}}{m}$ 

#### **MORE FROM US**

For more features on the Pacific War, look out for our **Pearl Harbor special edition**, in the shops soon: historyextra.com/ special-editions





arrived over the Mobile Force at the same moment. In short, with small but evenly o matched forces, vulnerable target ships, reliance on visual observation rather than radar, and unpredictable weather conditions, it's not impossible to imagine a scenario in which the battle ended as a draw, or even an American defeat. But it didn't, and that very fact is every bit as much a result of Japanese deficiencies as the vagaries of luck.

But of all the my conservations of the arguably shaped popular perceptions of the

battle more than any other: and that's the assertion that Midway was a major turning-point, one that changed irrevocably the course of the Pacific War.

One of the main drivers of this perception is the claim that Midway destroyed the Japanese carrier fleet. Again, that's simply not the case. Shokaku and Zuikaku were soon available once more, as were the four smaller carriers that had not been with the Mobile Force. Another medium-sized converted carrier was nearing readiness, and many of the aircrew at Midway survived the carrier



**War-winning development** 

The California Shipbuilding Corporation celebrates launching five ships in five days, January 1943. The Japanese had no answer to US industrial might

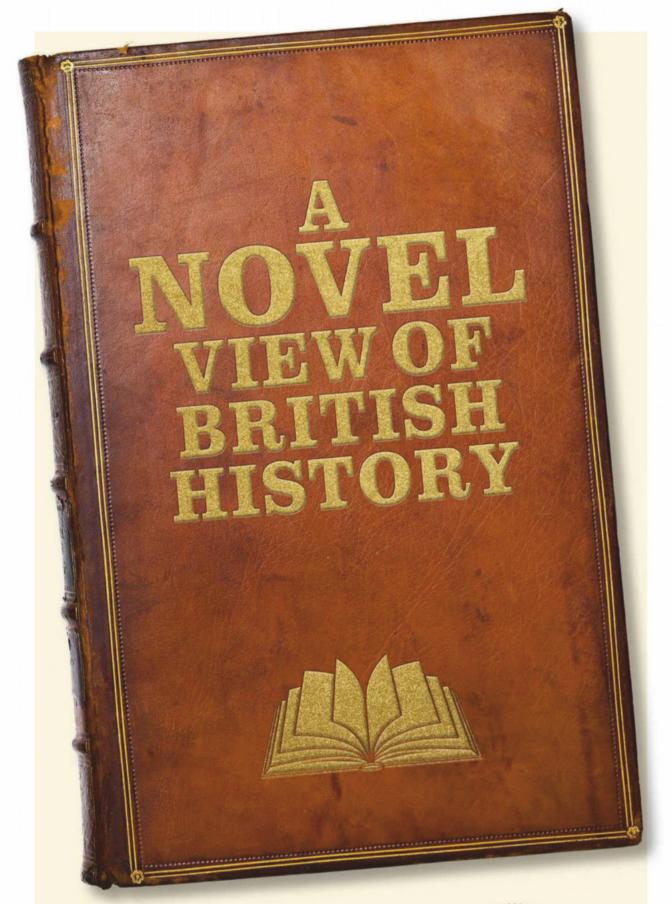
sinkings. In fact, at the battle of the Santa Cruz Islands in October 1942, the Japanese assembled a carrier fleet more powerful than that of the Americans.

And let's not forget that the Americans themselves sustained significant losses in this first period of the Pacific War. They lost a large carrier at the battle of the Coral Sea, *Yorktown* at Midway, and two more large carriers in the Guadalcanal area (one to a submarine in September, and another to carrier attacks). Indeed, in early 1943, Nimitz had just one large carrier at his disposal; so scant were American resources that HMS Victorious had to be sent to the Pacific as a reinforcement.

But the cupboard wouldn't remain bare for long. By the autumn of 1943, new carriers began to arrive from American shipyards – and it was these carriers that would power the Americans to victory in the Pacific in 1945. The Japanese navy may have survived its bloody nose at Midway but it had no effective carrier replacement programme. And so, when the US brought its awesome industrial capacity to bear, Japan was overwhelmed. For all the attention paid to the 'miraculous' events of 4 June 1942, the Americans' ability to produce new vessels at an unprecedented speed was the true war-winning development - and that would have occurred whatever the outcome at Midway. **H** 

**Evan Mawdsley** is the former Professor of International History at the University of Glasgow. His most recent book is The War for the Seas: *A Maritime History of World War II* (Yale, 2019)

The new film **Midway**, starring Ed Skrein and Patrick Wilson, will be released in UK cinemas on 8 November https://midway.movie



As a BBC Two series marks the 300th birthday of the English language novel, we ask six leading authors and academics to pick the works of fiction they feel have best captured life in Britain and its empire since 1719

Complements

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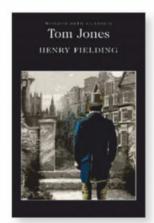
See page 84 for more details

**18TH-CENTURY BRITAIN** 

#### The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling

by **Henry Fielding** (1749)

Chosen by Joseph Crawford



Henry Fielding began his career as a playwright, who became famous for his political satires on the government of Sir Robert Walpole. His plays so enraged the authorities that they passed a Licensing Act in 1737,

banning the performance of any drama that had not been approved by the Lord Chamberlain. Knowing that permission would never be granted for any of his works to be performed, Fielding abandoned the stage and began writing novels instead, becoming one of the earliest and greatest authors of comic prose fiction in English. *Tom Jones* (1749) is Fielding's masterpiece: a comic epic that describes how its outcast hero wanders across England against the backdrop of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion, seeking to discover his true identity and to be reunited with his true love, while having various bawdy and farcical adventures along the way.

Fielding wrote *Tom Jones* during the so-called 'age of reason', and much of the novel's comedy stems from its exploration of how fiction could be written about this demystified, rational age, for which classical epic and medieval romance seemed equally inappropriate. It mocks and delights in the muddle and silliness of ordinary life, which it depicted with a level of frankness that William Makepeace Thackeray thought was still unequalled a century later. Its intellectual boisterousness is very much of a piece with the erudite and scandalous era in which it was written, and yet even today it remains a very funny, perfectly plotted and deeply satisfying comic novel.

#### **ALSO TRY...**

- The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia by Samuel Johnson (1759)
- The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman by Laurence Sterne (1759–67)

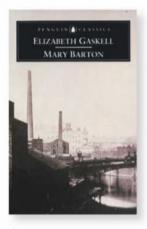
**Joseph Crawford** is senior lecturer in English literature at the University of Exeter

#### **19TH-CENTURY BRITAIN**

# Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life

by Elizabeth Gaskell (1848)

Chosen by Rosalind Crone



England of the 1830s and 1840s was in the grip of a social crisis. Industrialisation combined with rapid urbanisation had led to a decline in living standards, widening the gap between rich and poor, and fuelling

discontent. Concern for the plight of the poor and a fear of revolution led to the rise of the 'industrial novel', in which authors used vivid portrayals of factory work and urban slums to expose middle-class and upper-class readers to the true 'condition of England'.

Foremost in this genre was *Mary Barton*. Its author, Elizabeth Gaskell, wife of a Unitarian minister based in a Manchester slum, was witness to the growing wealth of employers and daily suffering of their employees. In *Mary Barton*, the character John Barton is drawn into a trade unionist plot to murder Harry Carson, son of a mill owner. Meanwhile Barton's daughter, Mary, rejects her working-class lover Jem Wilson in favour of Harry, who offers her the prospect of a comfortable life. When Jem is accused of Harry's murder, Mary fights to prove Jem's innocence without exposing her father.

The eventual resolution of the incident reveals Gaskell's belief that the solution to Britain's social crisis lay not in working-class political organisation, nor even in regulatory legislation, but in the cultivation of sympathetic relationships between employers and employees. Written at Chartism's height, *Mary Barton* provided a powerful, digestible defence of liberal capitalism that still resonates today.

#### **ALSO TRY...**

- **The Warden** by Anthony Trollope (1855)
- Far from the Madding Crowd by Thomas Hardy (1874)

**Rosalind Crone** is senior lecturer in history at the Open University

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Wim offers a unique window on the British imperial world in northern India at the turn of the century // Yasmin Khan



#### **BRITISH EMPIRE**

#### Kim

by **Rudyard Kipling** (1901)

Chosen by Yasmin Khan



Rudyard Kipling is often scorned by modern readers for being too gung-ho and imperialistic. He was undoubtedly a committed imperialist, and some of his stories and poems are deeply anachronistic in their attitudes to

race, and their overt promotion of the white man's civilising mission. *Kim*, however, is a masterpiece, and gives a unique window on the British imperial world in northern India at the turn of the century. Kimball 'Kim' O'Hara himself is a complex and intriguing character, and the novel belies any simplistic reading.

Part spy-tale, part children's fiction, set against the backdrop of the Great Game – a diplomatic conflict between Britain and Russia over central Asia – it tells the story of an Irish orphan boy, Kim, who lives on the streets of Lahore. This is the city where Kipling himself spent his early childhood, and where his father taught at an art school. Through Kim's eyes we experience the sights and smells of the bazaars, streets and shrines of northern India, from the plains to the Himalayas, as he travels around trying to scratch out a living. We meet a motley collection of Indian characters, from a Tibetan Lama to a Bengali spy.

Kim is trying to fit in, too poor and Irish to be accepted by snooty British imperial society, and too white and nominally Christian to find a real place with his Indian friends. His quest is a spiritual and emotional one, as he attempts to reconcile his different identities. The book is (perhaps unintentionally) revealing about the anxieties of the colonisers themselves.

#### ALSO TRY...

- Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad (1899)
- A Passage to India by EM Forster (1924)

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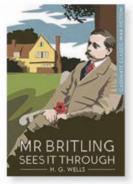
**Yasmin Khan** is associate professor of history at the University of Oxford. Her books include *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (Yale, 2007)

#### FIRST WORLD WAR

# Mr Britling Sees it Through

by **HG Wells** (1916)

Chosen by Mark Bostridge



HG Wells's *Mr Britling Sees it Through* has a fair claim to be the most significant British novel about the home front to appear during the First World War. Certainly it was the most popular.

Published in September 1916, it immediately struck a chord with the public, running through 13 editions within its first year, while earning widespread critical acclaim. Thomas Hardy considered it the war book that "gives just what we thought and felt at the time".

Superficially the novel, opening in the summer of 1914, reads like Wells's own thinly veiled autobiography. Through the eyes of Mr Direck, a US visitor to an Essex village, we first see Mr Britling and his household. Like Wells, Britling is a celebrity author who has a mistress, Mrs Harrowdean, based on Wells's liaison with Rebecca West. Like Wells, Britling grapples with the idea that the war that breaks out in August may be the war to end wars.

However, the mood of the book changes as Britling hears rumours of the war's atrocities and experiences loss at first hand. His enthusiasm and sense of idealism falter. Disillusioned, he realises that this is a war like any other, "a wearisome thrusting against a pressure of evils".

Britling's son Hugh is killed in the trenches. In the final chapter, Britling attempts to make sense of his death, but words fail him and he breaks off in despair. Nevertheless, Wells leaves his readers with a message of hope: democracy must be perfected, and the "adventurers" who have betrayed mankind "into this morass of hate and blood" must be condemned.

#### **ALSO TRY...**

 Non-Combatants and Others by Rose Macaulay (1916)

• The Return of the Soldier by Rebecca West (1918)

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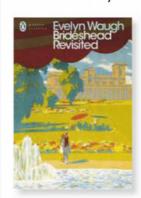
Mark Bostridge is a writer and critic. His books include The Fateful Year: England 1914 (Viking, 2014)

#### **SECOND WORLD WAR**

#### Brideshead Revisited

by Evelyn Waugh (1945)

Chosen by James Holland



Although only part of Evelyn Waugh's novel is set during the Second World War, it was written between December 1943 and June 1944, while the author was recovering from a parachute

accident. Waugh served in the army during the conflict, including a stint with the Commandos, with whom he saw action at the battle of Crete in 1941.

Despite his reputation as a brilliant comic novelist, *Brideshead* is a wistful and rather mournful piece, narrated by Charles Ryder, an artist. One night during the war, Ryder arrives at a new army camp, only to discover that he has come to the grounds of a country house he knows very well: Brideshead, the home of the aristocratic Flyte family. This prompts him to reflect on his relationship with the family – first with Sebastian, the eccentric and tragic son; then Sebastian's sister Julia, with whom Charles had an intense affair in the years leading up to the war.

Brideshead has been my favourite book since I first read it as a teenager – one that includes a brilliant depiction of Britain's wartime army, in which civilian conscripts forced into the strict parameters of army life make for awkward and ill-fitting bedfellows.

#### ALSO TRY...

- Put Out More Flags by Evelyn Waugh
- Caught by Henry Green (1943)

**James Holland's** latest book is *Normandy '44: D-Day and the Battle for France* (Bantam, 2019)

Waugh gives us a brilliant depiction of the wartime army //

#### **POSTWAR BRITAIN**

#### The Lowlife

by Alexander Baron (1963)

Chosen by Clair Wills



Alexander Baron was well known in the 1950s for his trilogy of novels based on his experiences during the Second World War. But his masterpiece, *The Lowlife*, is a different kind of book. The narrator has left

the Jewish East End of his childhood for a somewhat more respectable lodging in the leafier parts of Stoke Newington. Harryboy Boas lives in one room at the top of a house, alongside an ageing white spinster, an English family, a West Indian couple, and his Jewish landlord in the basement.

The Lowlife was written around the time of the Profumo affair and the related scandal over Rachmanism, the trend of tenant exploitation named after the landlord Peter Rachman. Both Christine Keeler and Mandy Rice-Davies had been in relationships with Rachman and lived in one of his properties. Harryboy is a hopeless, inverse shadow of Rachman: he is friendly with a high-class call girl, Marcia, but she employs him, rather than the other way around, to collect money from the immigrant tenants of her string of slum houses.

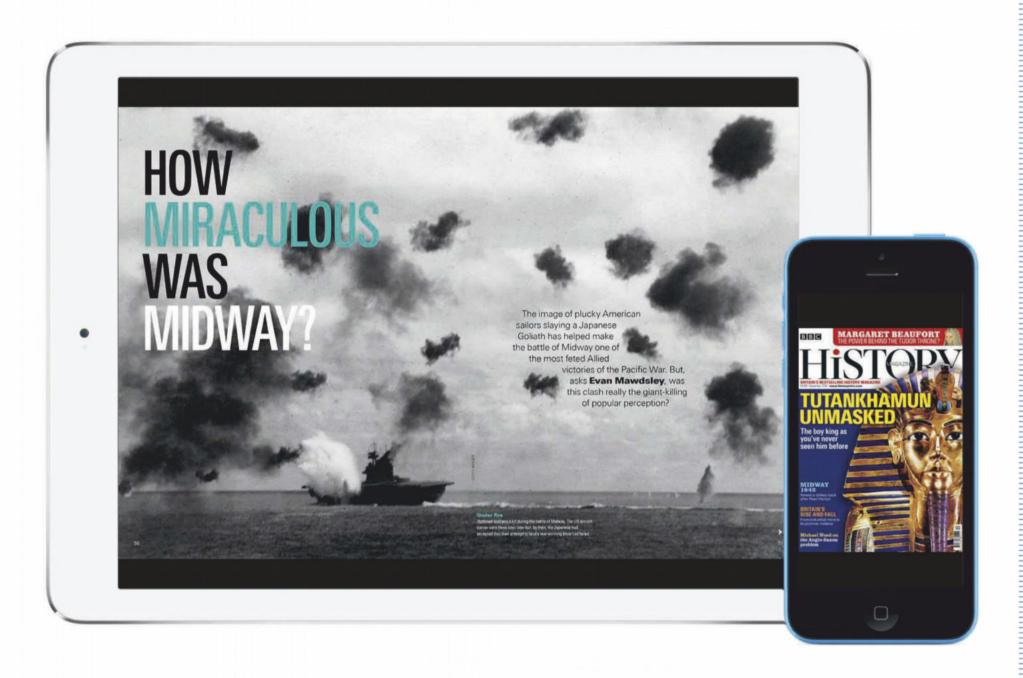
It is a very funny book, but carries an ethical charge. Baron celebrates the new communities built through Commonwealth immigration by reminding us how the aftermath of the Holocaust played out in postwar London. Harryboy insists on staying a 'lowlife', living hand-to-mouth by gambling on the dogs, and one strand of the novel links his habit of self-sabotage to survivor guilt.

In lovingly recollecting a Yiddish-speaking past, Baron implies that, unless we cherish racial and ethnic difference, none of our communities will survive.

#### **ALSO TRY...**

- **Absolute Beginners** by Colin MacInnes (1959)
- The Girls of Slender Means by Muriel Spark (1963)

Clair Wills's most recent book is Lovers and Strangers: An Immigrant History of Post-War Britain (Penguin, 2018) BBC History Magazine is Britain's bestselling history magazine. We feature leading historians writing lively and thought-provoking new takes on the great events of the past.



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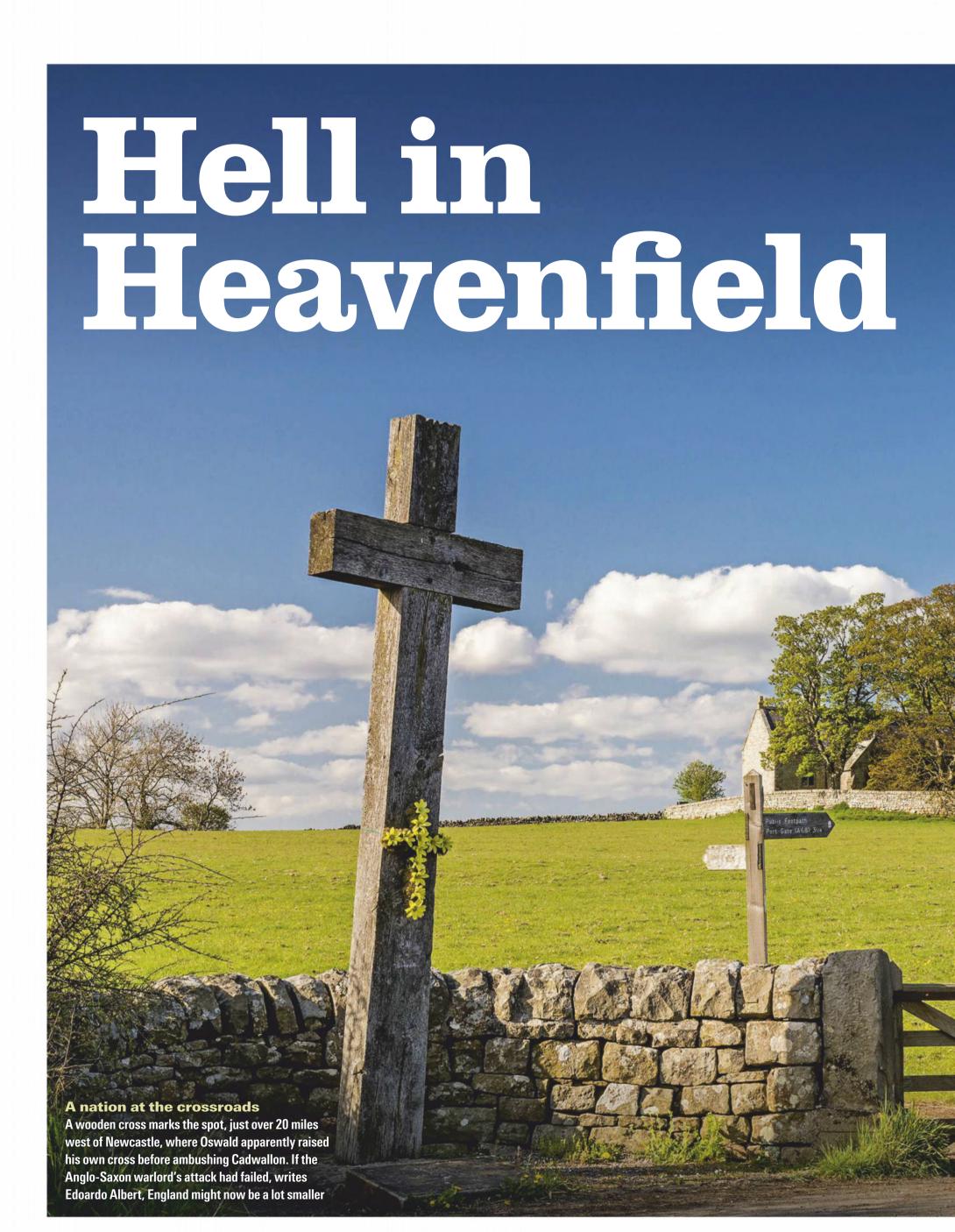
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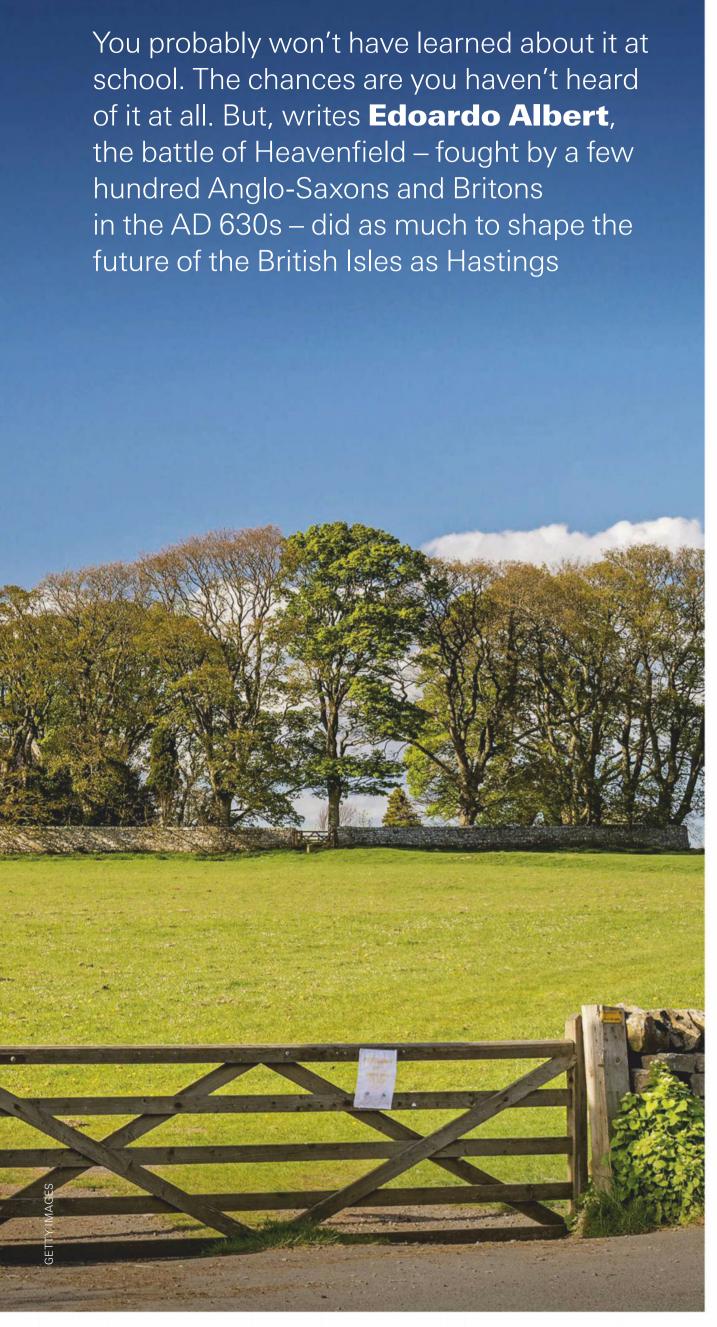












t was a bleak place to die. The moors rose steeply from the east bank of the Devil's Water, their flanks and summits bare of cover. The river itself, which had provided the remnants of the retreating army with some protection at the start of the rout, now boxed them in. Coming to another stream, Denis Brook, the leader of the retreating men signalled those still left with him to turn and make a stand. The moors rose up to the south. There was no escape that way, not with their pursuers following so close behind. The only chance was to buy a little time, to bloody the hunters so that they had to stop and regroup, and then attempt to escape.

Cadwallon, King of Gwynedd, the most successful warlord in the British Isles, ranged his retainers beside him, anchoring the flank against the river. There were so few of them now that he could do nothing to protect the right wing of his shield wall. They waited. But they did not have to wait long.

The man leading the pursuers had been given a nickname, *Lamnguin*, when he was still a boy. *Lamnguin* meant 'white blade'. But it was not white any longer. The pursuer's name was Oswald and with him were warriors from the Gaelic kingdom of Dál Riata, a small contingent of monks from the Holy Isle of Iona, and Oswiu, his younger brother. Oswald had spent much of his life in exile in Dál Riata, while rival Anglo-Saxon strongmen and then King Cadwallon had wielded power in his native Northumbria. Now he had returned to claim the kingdom.

The final battle was brief but bloody. At its end, Cadwallon and his men lay dead, their weapons robbed, their bodies stripped of the garnet-inlaid gold buckles and arm rings so beloved of seventh-century warriors. Oswald's triumph was complete.

#### Glory-hungry men

If Cadwallon's death was brutal, it was hardly unusual. Early medieval history is littered with kings who seized power at the point of a sword and attracted glory-hungry young men to their warband, until a battle too far ended in their utter defeat. But Cadwallon was different, and so was the clash at which he made his last stand. Today, few people have heard of the battle of Heavenfield. Its precise location – just over 20 miles west of Newcastle in modern-day Northumberland - was lost to history until the 19th century, and we're not even sure if it was fought in AD 633 or 634. But the significance of this clash to the future balance of power between England, Scotland and Wales cannot be overstated. Perhaps more than any battle

#### RIVAL WARLORDS The two men who fought to the death in Heavenfield

#### **Oswald**

#### The pious conqueror

Oswald (born 603/04) was forced into exile as a 12-year-old boy when his uncle, Edwin, killed his father, Æthelfrith, and took the kingdom of Northumbria. Oswald grew to manhood in the kingdom of Dál Riata. While there, the previously pagan Oswald embraced Christianity, and gained a reputation for martial valour and Christian piety. When Edwin was killed by Cadwallon, King of Gwynedd, Oswald remained in Dál Riata, only launching his own effort to retake the throne after Cadwallon had killed two other pretenders, both relatives of Oswald.

Victorious at the battle of Heavenfield, Oswald brought monks from
lona to preach the new religion to the
Northumbrians, in the process
creating institutions that were able
to survive his own death in 642. A
cult rapidly developed around Oswald,
with the martyred king – he died in
battle against the pagan king of the
Mercians – becoming a popular saint
in Britain and Germany.

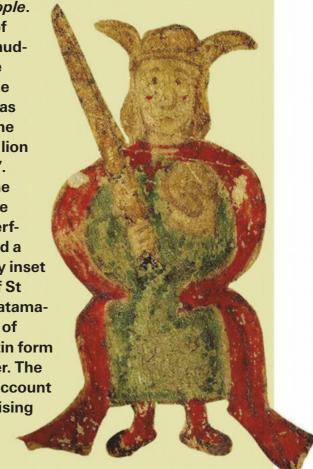
#### **Cadwallon**

#### The scourge of the Anglo-Saxons

So large did Cadwallon ap Cadfan (died

c634) loom in the Anglo-Saxon imagination that Bede made him the principal villain of the first half of his *Ecclesi- astical History of the English People*. In Bede's account, the king of Gwynedd was a violent marauder, bent on exterminating the Northumbrian people. But the Britons regarded Cadwallon as their last great champion, "the fierce affliction of his foes, a lion

prosperous over the Saxons". On the isle of Anglesey, the breadbasket of Gwynedd, the kings had their palace at Aberffraw. There, Cadwallon raised a memorial stone, visible today inset into the wall of the Church of St Cadwaladr. It reads: "King Catamanus, wisest, most renowned of kings." Catamanus is the Latin form of Cadfan, Cadwallon's father. The brutal war-leader of Bede's account raised a Latin inscription praising the wisdom of his father. History, as written by different sides.



in history, it was Heavenfield that drew the map of modern Britain.

For all its significance, Heavenfield was not a battle that involved vast armies. This was a time when a warband of 50 men might win a kingdom. A later law code, promulgated by King Ine of Wessex in 694, defines an army as a group of 35 or more men. So it is likely that, as that most famous of Anglo-Saxon historians, Bede, writes in his account of the battle, Oswald was leading a small band of men when he confronted Cadwallon.

Bede also informs us that Oswald camped on the northern side of Hadrian's Wall. His comrades, knowing they would face a numerically superior enemy, were relying on the tactics of surprise and assault that Oswald had learned during his years in Dál Riata (a kingdom that stretched from north-east Ireland across the North Channel to Argyll).

#### Ready to strike

Oswald's aim was to attack Cadwallon before news of his presence could reach the King of Gwynedd. Near St Oswald's Church, which commemorates the 'heavenly field' where Oswald and his men camped the night before the battle, archaeologists discovered the



Blessing of the holy men

Iona Abbey basks in the sun on Scotland's Inner Hebrides. The night before the battle of Heavenfield, Oswald had a dream in which St Columba, the monastery's founder, promised him victory remains of one of Hadrian Wall's milecastles. This would have made a good night camp for Oswald and his men, providing shelter and cover from eyes looking from the direction of Cadwallon's camp.

It must have been a tense night. During the course of it, according to the account written by Adomnán, abbot of Iona from 679–704, Oswald had a dream vision of St Columba, the founder of the monastery on Iona. In the vision, the saint promised Oswald victory on the morrow. For Oswald, who had gone into exile as the pagan son of pagan Anglians, had become enchanted by the new faith of the Holy Isle. In Bede's account Oswald also raised a cross before his warband, holding it in place while his men made it firm, then kneeling with his men to ask God's blessing for their cause.

While he knelt there praying, Oswald would have known that he was about to pit himself against a formidable foe. Cadwallon had already defeated Oswald's uncle, King Edwin, in battle, triggering the collapse of his nascent Northumbrian kingdom. After defeating Edwin, Cadwallon, unusually, did not return to Gwynedd. Instead he remained in Northumbria, killing two further

ALAMY/THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES/AWL IMAGES



**Hiding place** Hadrian's Wall snakes through the Northumberland countryside. On the eve of the battle, Oswald's men sought cover from the prying eyes of the Britons' army in one of the milecastles dotted along the wall

claimants to the Northumbrian throne, Edwin's cousin Osric and Oswald's half-brother, Eanfrith.

Bede portrays Cadwallon as a rapacious predator, bent on destroying the Anglian kingdom of Northumbria and its people. His portrait is one-sided: for the Britons, the native people of Britain, Cadwallon was a champion, their 'furious stag' who broke from the mountain strongholds to which they had withdrawn to reclaim their inheritance. As such, Cadwallon's long stay in Northumbria, which had become the pre-eminent Anglo-Saxon kingdom under the rule of King Edwin, makes some sense. Cadwallon was a Christian, a man who was still sufficiently versed in Roman culture to have a Latin epitaph carved on his father's gravestone. But the monks of Iona, the most important spiritual centre in the Irish Sea, decided to favour their own man, Oswald, in the struggle for Northumbria. The descendants of Cadwallon, the Welsh, included in their lament for their fallen champion a veiled reference to the treachery of Iona: "From the plotting of strangers and iniquitous monks, as the water flows from the fountain, Sad and heavy will be the day for Cadwallon."

Cadwallon's army had been on campaign for more than a year. But his initial warband had bloated with hangers-on and the loot of many victories. Camping somewhere near the village of Corbridge, Cadwallon could guard the bridge over the river Tyne. But Oswald had advanced faster than the news Bede portrays
Cadwallon as a
rapacious predator.
But to the Britons, he
was a champion who
had reclaimed their
inheritance

of his landing could reach Cadwallon. And so, when Oswald attacked at dawn, his enemy's camp was thrown into panic.

The battle turned into a series of skirmishes. Cadwallon attempted a fighting withdrawal. His end came, as Bede reports, by the Denisesburn, the Brook of Denis. While Denis Brook might have been well known in Bede's time, its name was later forgotten, and with it the location of the battle's climax. It was only the discovery, in the 19th century, of a 13th-century charter that made over land to Thomas of Whittington between Denisesburn and Divelis that the location was known again, for the Divelis is another name for the Devil's Water. There Cadwallon died and Oswald claimed the Northumbrian throne.

As king, Oswald gave to the monks of Iona another island, Lindisfarne, within sight of

his ancestral stronghold on Bamburgh. And with Aidan, abbot and bishop of Lindisfarne, he set about doing something that no other king of early medieval Britain had done before: create a kingdom strong enough to survive his death. The results would be momentous. Today, shaped by centuries of the political geography of Britain, we take it as read that one island should hold three nations: England, Scotland and Wales. But it was the battle of Heavenfield that played a key part in making it this way.

#### **Furious fiery stag**

By the seventh century, Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were established in the south and east of the country, but the extent of their domination was far from settled. There were natural barriers in the Pennines, and long-standing kingdoms that had weathered the first two centuries of Anglo-Saxon expansion. Imagine Cadwallon victorious. The north would have belonged to the 'furious fiery stag' who had restored the territory of the *combrogi*, the 'men of the same country' – the word that became Cymry. Yr Hen Ogledd, the Old North, had declined but there was still strength in it, in kingdoms such as Strathclyde. Northumbria's downfall would have allowed the expansion of these kingdoms. In what is today Scotland, the Picts and the Dál Riatans would have continued their long struggle without having to constantly guard against the Northumbrians' expansionist tendencies.

If Cadwallon had reigned for 20 years as king of Northumbria, there would probably still have been a division of the country between Anglo-Saxons, Britons, Picts and Scots, but the proportions would have been different. One can imagine an 'England' confined to the south and east, bounded by the Pennines and the Humber marshes or even the Wash. While this area still contains much prime agricultural land, there would have been sufficient good farmland in the rest of the country for the kingdoms of the Britons to not suffer so markedly from the economic disadvantages of being confined to unproductive areas. Fortune's dice would not have been loaded so heavily for

The battle of Heavenfield, fought between at most a few hundred men from two obscure kingdoms of early medieval Britain, set the arc of the future history of our isle. You may not have heard of it until now but, in terms of significance, it ranks right up there with Hastings.

**Edoardo Albert** is co author, with Paul Gething, of *Warrior: A Life of War in Anglo-Saxon Britain* (Granta Books, 2019)





#### **HISTORICAL FICTION**

"Some men fitted back into civilian life easily after WWI, but others found it very difficult"

Caroline Scott on her new novel

The Photographer of the Lost > page 77



**GLOBAL HISTORY** 

# Over time, oceans became the backdrop for global interaction



Margaret Small on David
Abulafia's *The Boundless Sea:*A Human History of the Oceans
> page 72

#### **INTERVIEW**

"When Richard III took the throne, Margaret threw caution to the wind and risked it all"

Nicola Tallis on her new biography of Margaret Beaufort > page 68

#### MODERN

"Germany faced up to the legacies of racism in ways that the US has so far failed to do"

Mary Fulbrook reviews Susan Neiman's Learning from the Germans ➤ page 74

#### **CRUSADES**

"At Acre, the last great bastion of the Christian territories of the Holy Land finally fell"

**Sophie Thérèse Ambler on Roger Crowley's**Accursed Tower > page 77

# "Margaret wielded enormous power. She was a queen in all but name"

**NICOLA TALLIS** talks to Ellie Cawthorne about her new biography of matriarch Margaret Beaufort, whose sharp survival instinct during the Wars of the Roses secured her son the throne

Born in 1443, Margaret Beaufort belonged to a Lancastrian noble family with royal ancestry. By age 13, she had been married twice, widowed and given birth to a son, Henry Tudor. Margaret went on to marry two more times and survived several regime changes during the Wars of the Roses, as Lancastrian Henry VI was deposed by Yorkist Edward IV, before Edward's brother Richard III eventually took the throne. After the battle of Tewkesbury in 1471, her son Henry Tudor went into exile, returning to England in 1485 to defeat Richard at Bosworth and claim the crown as Henry VII. Margaret survived her son's 23-year reign, dying shortly after her grandson Henry VIII became king in 1509.

#### Ellie Cawthorne: What makes Margaret Beaufort such a fascinating subject for a biographer?

**Nicola Tallis:** Today, Margaret is best remembered as the mother of the Tudor dynasty – her only child, Henry, went on to become King Henry VII. But what makes her most intriguing to me is that she had a life packed with drama and was the most extraordinary character. In an age when women were expected to be obedient, and subservient to their husbands, Margaret broke the rules and wasn't afraid to make her voice heard in a male-dominated world.

We're also fortunate to have quite a lot of source material that gives us a glimpse into what Margaret was like as a person, especially in her later years. For example, we've got a relatively complete set of her household accounts. We know from them that she was a woman who loved to be entertained – she had two fools, and enjoyed hunting,



Uncrowned Queen: The Fateful Life of Margaret Beaufort, Tudor Matriarch

by Nicola Tallis (Michael O' Mara, 400 pages, £20) hawking and gambling. We also see payments in her accounts for white wine, gloves, slippers and jewels, so she was clearly fond of the finer things in life.

#### Margaret's early life was dominated by instability. How did that affect her?

The fact that she lived through precarious times affected her life from the beginning. Growing up, her future was subject to the whims of men and power politics.

Margaret certainly had a devastating start in life. Her father died just a couple of days before her first birthday, probably at his own hand. Her first marriage – to John de la Pole, when she was a young child – was dissolved. Later her guardian, the Duke of Suffolk, was murdered, and when Margaret was just 13 her second husband, Edmund Tudor, died

of plague. She was also heavily pregnant at the time. Suddenly, all her male protectors were gone, and she was left incredibly vulnerable.

After all of this, I think she realised that relying on the men around her could be a risky business. From that point onwards she really took control of her own destiny, and began to make her own decisions; she was determined to avoid a husband she didn't want being thrust upon her. Rather extraordinarily, given that she was still a child at the time, she played a substantial role in arranging her own third marriage.

#### How did the experience of becoming a mother at such a young age change Margaret's life?

I think it's fair to say that Margaret started life by playing by the rules. But when her son was born, her entire outlook changed. Suddenly it was not just herself that she had to consider, she also had this whole other life to protect – one that was infinitely more precious to her.

Protecting Henry was always a real driving force for Margaret. Even much later, when Henry was on the throne, she continued to worry about her son's welfare. She was an almost constant presence by his side for the first 10 years or so of his reign, and was especially concerned when he was plagued by pretenders.

Margaret's confessor, John Fisher, described how, even in prosperity, she was always worrying about falling into adversity again. She was constantly wracked with anxiety about keeping Henry and her family safe – I feel like that was her primary motivation in everything she did.

# Where did Margaret's allegiances lie in the Wars of the Roses? Was she motivated by family loyalty or just a canny political operator looking for her next opportunity?

A bit of both. Margaret was very loyal to the House of Lancaster, but she'd also learnt pragmatism from an early age. She was astute enough to know when a battle or a cause was lost, at least for the time being. For example, it was at her urging that her 14-year-old son Henry Tudor fled abroad following the Lancastrian defeat at Tewkesbury in 1471, and didn't return home again until 1485.

We can also see this pragmatism at play when Edward IV became king in 1461. Then, Margaret realised that she had no choice but to submit to the House of York. She tried her best to ingratiate herself with the Yorkist regime, laying low and trying to keep in Edward's good books.

This seems to have been a successful strategy, because Margaret played an increasingly prominent role at the Yorkist court as the 1470s drew on. We know that at the christening of Edward and Elizabeth Woodville's last child in 1480, Margaret carried the baby princess to the font. That indicates to me that Elizabeth Woodville had come to trust Margaret to a certain extent. We also know that she was busy



trying to negotiate with the king for the return of her son from exile. Edward IV did actually draw up a draft pardon for Henry, but like an episode from a soap opera, he died before the pardon could be implemented. Soon after, Richard III came to the throne, and suddenly everything was up in the air – especially Henry's future. At that point, Margaret threw caution to the wind and decided to risk it all.

#### Margaret helped instigate a plot to overthrow Richard III. What did the scheme involve?

By October 1483, just a few months after Richard's usurpation, Margaret had already become involved in plans for a rebellion against him. Led by her kinsman, the Duke of Buckingham, the plot intended to overthrow Richard and replace him with Margaret's son, Henry, who was exiled in Brittany at the time. We know that she was busy working on her son's behalf, sending messengers abroad to keep Henry informed of what was going on in England. At the same time, Margaret had also been plotting with Elizabeth Woodville (who was then living in penury in Westminster Abbey) to unite the houses of Lancaster and York by marrying Henry to Elizabeth's daughter, Elizabeth of York.

But the Buckingham plot was a dismal failure. The Duke of Buckingham himself was executed. Henry, who'd sailed to England, swiftly turned around and headed back to Brittany. Margaret could quite easily have met a traitor's death herself – the only reason she kept her head was because Richard III needed the support of her fourth husband, Lord Stanley. It was a lucky escape, but she was placed under house arrest with her husband as her custodian, forbidden to have any contact with her son and stripped of all her lands. That must have been a bitter pill to swallow.

## Some people have theorised that Margaret had a hand in the disappearance of the princes in the Tower. What do you make of that claim?

To be honest, I don't think there's a case to answer – it's just absurd. I think that the princes' fate is one of those mysteries that has captured popular imagination, and Margaret has been one of the proposed suspects for their murder. But it's really important to recognise that not one single contemporary source links Margaret with their disappearance. To me, that is the most convincing argument that she wasn't involved.

# In 1485, Margaret's fortunes were reversed when her son Henry returned to England, defeated Richard and took the throne. How much influence did she hold as mother of the king?

As soon as Henry became king, Margaret's position was completely transformed. By this time, she had achieved an extraordinary level of wealth. In a completely unprecedented move, an act was passed through parliament that gave her financial independence from her husband, Thomas Stanley. All of her lands were now entirely her own. Although Margaret and Stanley remained on good terms, she also separated from him and, with his approval, took a vow of chastity. It's almost like she waited for the moment when her son became king to suddenly turn around and say: "I don't need a husband. Now I can do my own thing, I'm my own woman and no one is going to stop me."

Margaret helped plot a rebellion against Richard III. The plan was to overthrow the king and replace him with her son, Henry



**Born survivor** Margaret Beaufort, seen here in a 16th-century portrait, managed to negotiate turbulent times to become the matriarch of the Tudor dynasty

And it wasn't just financial independence Margaret gained as mother of the king – she was also able to wield political power on an unprecedented scale. At the beginning of the Tudor dynasty, she was undoubtedly the most powerful woman in the realm – certainly a lot more powerful than Henry's wife, Elizabeth of York. From 1499 onwards, she even became Henry's unofficial lieutenant in the Midlands, passing judgments and delivering justice in his name. The fact that Henry allowed his mother to wield so much power is a real testament to the strength of their relationship, which is quite remarkable considering that they hadn't actually spent that much time together. When her son died in 1509, Margaret also acted as unofficial regent for a few weeks until her grandson Henry VIII reached his 18th birthday, overseeing the funeral and coronation arrangements.

Her position gave her the opportunity to legitimately voice her opinions and she was able to carve out a completely new role for herself within the Tudor regime. Everyone referred to her as 'My Lady, the King's Mother', and after 1499 she began signing herself 'Margaret R'. There's been lots of debate over whether this R was for Richmond [from her second husband's title] or Regina. Personally, I think it was for Regina. I feel like that says it all: Margaret was basically a queen in all but name. That is really where the title of my book, *Uncrowned Queen*, comes from.

#### What kind of woman emerges from your biography?

Margaret has been given a bad reputation in some quarters, but I came away from writing the book feeling like a lot of the criticism is unjustified. I actually found her to be a woman for whom I have a great deal of admiration and empathy. There's no doubt that she could be grasping on occasion, and politically ruthless. But she could also be warm, and extremely generous.

Ultimately, I feel like this was a woman who was driven by love for her son. Everything that she did, from an early age right until the very end of her life, was motivated by devotion to

her family.

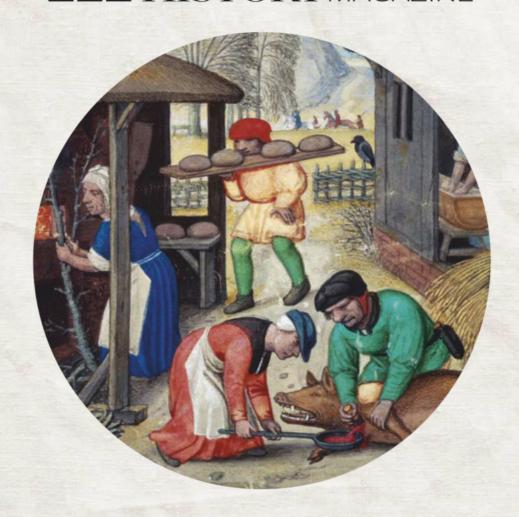
The 15th century was a really extraordinary period for women – all the turbulent ups and downs offered the opportunity to play a role in politics in a way that had never existed before. Margaret grabbed that opportunity with both hands – she wasn't afraid to make her voice heard and pursue something that she saw as her right.

#### **MORE FROM US**

Listen to an extended version of this interview with Nicola Tallis on our podcast soon at historyextra.com/podcast

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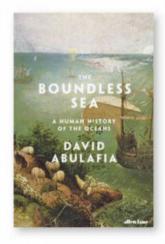
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### Tides of time

**MARGARET SMALL** recommends a globe-spanning voyage through several millennia of humans' seafaring history, which reveals how oceans have shaped our societies



#### The Boundless Sea: A Human History of the Oceans

by David Abulafia Allen Lane, 1088 pages, £35

David Abulafia's *The Boundless Sea* is certainly a monumental work in scope, scholarship and size.

Beginning with what he calls the "oldest ocean" and the advent of the Aborigines in

Australia 60,000 years ago, the book traces humans' relationship with the oceans right up to the present day.

Abulafia has drawn on a lifetime of work on interconnected histories in order to create this impressive, readable but scholarly work. He weaves together a wealth of sources – from folklore and archaeology to traded goods and company records – to demonstrate how oceans have been a fundamental means of connectivity on a grand scale in human history.

The task that Abulafia set himself was to look beyond specific regions or bodies of

water to show how, over centuries and millennia, oceans became the backdrop for global interaction. By studying single oceanic regions, we lose sight of what is a wholly interconnected space. While the Pacific, Arctic, Atlantic and Indian oceans had separate communication networks, they also started interacting fully with one another in the period following the European discovery of the Americas.

However, there's a lot more to this book than discussions of trade and connectivity; as the subtitle suggests, it is full of human stories. We learn, for example, about the legendary Polynesian figure Kupe, who was said to have reached the north island of New Zealand while hunting an enormous and ravaging octopus.

The human discovery of New Zealand is set in the context of hunting, migration and exploration. But it ends with a profoundly human anecdote. When Kupe finally returned to his homeland, Hawaiki, he was asked if he would go back to New Zealand. According to Abulafia, "he answered that question with the question: 'E hoki Kupe? Will Kupe return?', a phrase that continued to be used in Aotearoa [the north island of New Zealand] as a polite but firm refusal." We may not be able to take these fantastical tales at face value but Abulafia shows how they have much to teach us.

Likewise – via a case study of the island of Socotra off the coast of Somalia – he demonstrates how archaeological evidence can improve our understanding of global seafaring history. Unable to grow food to support its own population, Socotra was wholly dependent on trade, swapping tortoiseshell and incense for goods from Arabia, India and Africa. Drawings and inscriptions on the walls of Socotra's Hocq cave reveal the diversity of the merchants coming ashore on the island – there are Indian, Iranian, Ethiopic, South Arabian, Aramaic and even Greek inscriptions dating from the first to the sixth centuries AD. The cave drawings even show the kind of boats that moored on Socotra's coastline.

This may be an isolated anecdote, but Abulafia uses it to paint a far bigger picture – one that offers us a snapshot of a complex trade network whose tentacles stretched from southern Africa and India to Iran and Greece.

The Boundless Sea is nominally divided into four parts, following a broadly chronological and geographical arrangement. The first three sections cover the Pacific (the oldest ocean), the Indian (the middle ocean) and the Atlantic (the youngest ocean). The final part, 'Oceans in Conversation', deals with the briefest timespan (1492 to the present), but takes up nearly half the book. This makes sense when you consider Abulafia's emphasis on connected histories.

While this final section focuses far more on societies, nations and companies, the author still employs individual anecdotes to provide a lens on human interaction with the sea. In what he calls a "revolting story", we learn of the Portuguese Francesco de Almeida's use of gunboat diplomacy to force trade in the Indian Ocean – an incident that helps illustrate the shape of Portuguese encroachment into the Pacific.

Similarly, while discussing European

encounters with Australia, Abulafia relays the horrifying tale of the psychopathic Dutch Frisian apothecary Jeronimus Cornelisz, who - after being shipwrecked aboard the *Batavia* off the coast of western Australia in 1629 - butchered, strangled and bludgeoned more than 100 of his fellow survivors.

Peppered throughout, these fascinating anecdotes are part of what make The Boundless Sea so readable. But they also render the book less accessible, as few readers will be familiar with all the places that Abulafia cites. What's more, while the book is filled with

The legendary Polynesian figure Kupe was said to have reached the north island of New Zealand while hunting an enormous and ravaging octopus //

maps, these are often broad in scope, designed to show the scale of the Earth's oceans. At times, they would benefit from providing more detail, to help readers navigate their way around the many settlements that are discussed.

Europeans were the first to cross all the oceans - and, as such, it's Europeans who dominate the final part of the *The Boundless* Sea. There's always a danger that a book like this will turn into a story of European - rather than global - interaction with the sea. For the most part, Abulafia avoids falling into this trap but, at times, it's a close-run thing.

The book draws to an end with the founding of the Suez and Panama canals. Abulafia uses these incidents to show how humans' need to link oceans has even reshaped the very land we live on: Asia and Africa have been severed from one other, as have North and South America.

The final pages leave us with some food for thought. As Abulafia points out, human activity is increasingly damaging the very oceanic environment that has done so much to bring us together. Our relationship with the ocean is ever changing – and that change isn't always for the better. **II** 

Margaret Small is a lecturer specialising in the history of early modern European exploration at the University of Birmingham

#### **AUTHORS ON THE PODCAST**

**Serhii Plokhy** on an unexpected US-Soviet collaboration

"Americans resided for about a year at three air bases on Soviet territory - the only case in which the **US and the Soviets** fought side by side together in World



War II. My book tells the story of the transition to the Cold War, in which the personalities and places won't be very familiar, even to those who've read about the Grand Alliance."

**Daisy Dunn** on the death of Pliny the Elder during the eruption of Vesuvius

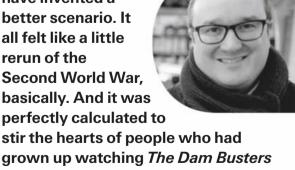
"Pliny landed at Stabiae where he stayed the night, trying to carry on as normal. But during that night the earth tremors intensified to such an



extent that he realised that if he stayed inside the villa, he could well be trapped. He strapped a pillow to his head and ventured into the danger zone, hoping to find a way out by sea. Unable to escape fast enough, Pliny seems to have been asphyxiated by the volcanic cloud on the beach."

#### **Dominic Sandbrook** on British attitudes to the Falklands War

"No scriptwriter could have invented a better scenario. It all felt like a little rerun of the Second World War, basically. And it was



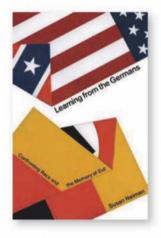
stir the hearts of people who had grown up watching The Dam Busters and Dad's Army. People had not associated the British flag with victory for 30 or 40 years, but the Falklands War changed the story."

**MORE FROM US** 

Listen to these episodes and more for free at historyextra.com/podcast

# Toxic inheritances

MARY FULBROOK is impressed by a new study that contrasts how Germany and the United States have dealt with the long aftermath of state-sanctioned racism



Learning from the Germans: Race and the Memory of Evil Susan Neiman Allen Lane, 432 pages, £20

So much has been made of the evils of Germany's Nazi past, and so clearly has the United States been cast

as liberator of Europe from the Nazi yoke, that it seems initially surprising to suggest that the US could learn from Germany about how to deal with the legacies of racism. But this is the thesis that Susan Neiman, a philosopher specialising in the analysis of evil, advances in this compelling, personal account.

Neiman is well placed to make the comparison. Growing up as a white woman in the American South, she experienced at first hand the legacies of slavery and persisting racism in the US. And as a Jew who lives in Germany's capital city, Berlin, she is well placed to observe the ways in which Germans have dealt with Nazism. The result is a fascinating mixture of "analysis and anecdote", in which Neiman's own intelligent voice can be clearly heard throughout.

The differences are well known. In the US, slavery was formally abolished in the wake of the Civil War, with the 13th Amendment of 1865. But the so-called Jim Crow laws passed in the decades around the turn of the century in the formerly Confederate Southern states effectively disenfranchised African-Americans and ensured strict segregation. These racist laws were only overturned in the 1960s, but their legacies persist in the American South (and beyond).

In Germany, Hitler's "thousand-year Reich" lasted but a dozen years, during which it unleashed a world war of unparalleled genocidal aggression. Since defeat in 1945, both East and West Germany and now the united Germany have, in different ways, faced up to the legacies of racism in ways that the US, Neiman argues, has so far failed to do.

As far as acts of remembrance are concerned, Neiman certainly has a point. She perhaps downplays, however, the massive

disjuncture between West German public acknowledgement of responsibility and the fact that former perpetrators were allowed to get away unpunished, while recognition and compensation were refused to many former victims. This imbalance was hardly rectified by the more recent explosion of memorialisation propelled by subsequent generations, ashamed of their national past. Neiman mentions these aspects, but does not, in my view, weigh them sufficiently in the moral balance. She also points out that the commu-

Following defeat in 1945, **East and West Germany** both faced up to the legacies of racism in ways that the US, Neiman argues, has so far failed to do

nist German Democratic Republic, for all its dictatorial faults, in some respects did a better job of addressing its past than West Germany, although here she arguably underplays the significance of the anti-fascist myth across generations.

Yet, even if memorialisation of anti-Nazi resistance has at times been ambiguous, Germany long ago renounced Nazi symbols. This contrasts with the multiple failures to address persisting and sometimes murderous racism in the US, and to allow hated symbols such as the Confederate flag or statues of Confederate heroes to garner public acclaim. The author pulls no punches in her critique of Trump, whom she accuses of legitimising or condoning white supremacism.

Neiman's book is an informative and stimulating read, provocatively addressing significant questions that, sadly, remain all too relevant today. 🎹

Mary Fulbrook, FBA, is professor of German history at UCL and author of *Reckonings: Legacies* of Nazi Persecution and the Quest for Justice (OUP)



Opposed to change In Montgomery, Alabama in 1963, protesters take to the streets to oppose school integration. The US, argues Susan Neiman, has not done enough to grapple with the legacies of segregation

#### CHINA

#### Power and privilege



**Big Sister, Little Sister, Red Sister: Three** Women at the Heart of **Twentieth-Century China** by Jung Chang Jonathan Cape, 400 pages, £25

This is a story of privilege, wealth and power. It covers more than a century of tumultuous Chinese history, as seen through the lives of three remarkable sisters: Song Ailing, married to HH Kung, China's most powerful financier in the republican era (1912–49); Song Qingling, married to Sun Yatsen, exalted as the father of modern China by both communists and nationalists; and Song Meiling, who was married to Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of nationalist China from 1928-49.

The three sisters from Shanghai came into these positions via the strategising of their father, Charlie Soong, a US-trained missionary-turned-businessman, who passed his Christian faith and personal ambition on to his daughters. While earlier accounts of the 'Soong Dynasty' have emphasised the dark sides of the family's ruthlessness and shady dealings, Jung Chang's aim is to show the centrality of the sisters in the lives of the men they married and, by extension, in Chinese politics. Still, the book is often dominated by the sisters' often overrated husbands. Sun Yatsen, for example, hardly played the most important role in China's



Sister act From left to right: Song Ailing, Song Meiling and Song Qingling, photographed in Chongqing in 1940. A new book by Jung Chang explores the interconnected lives of the three influential Chinese siblings

transition from monarchy to republic.

A sense of the sisters' entitlement is omnipresent and there are many hints at the corrupt practices that sustained the three women's lifestyles. However, this is all brushed aside by the emphasis Chang places on the women's emotional and material needs, complex characters, intricate family relationships, and the moral and political constraints they endured as women living in a world dominated by men. Occasionally, readers are well advised to be doubtful – for example, Empress Dowager Cixi (1861–1908) is unconvincingly described as an initiator of reforms, and the person who kickstarted the liberation of China's women.

Overall, Big Sister, Little Sister, Red Sister provides an enjoyable take on China's

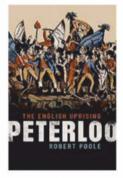
turbulent 20th-century history, seen through the revealing perspective of three women at the centre of power. Woven throughout the book are gems such as this quote from one of Meiling's letters to her friend, Emma: "Do you know, I have noticed that the most successful men are usually not the ones with great powers as geniuses but the ones who had such ultimate faith in their own selves that invariably they hypnotise others to that belief as well as themselves."

**Andrea Janku** is a senior lecturer in the history of China at SOAS University of London

Read an interview with Jung Chang about her new book in issue 19 of BBC World Histories magazine

#### BRITAIN

#### Shameful repression



Peterloo: The **English Uprising** by Robert Poole Oxford University Press, 480 pages, £25

This long-awaited book brings to life a central

episode in British history, when a crowded pro-democracy meeting held at St Peter's Field in Manchester was violently dispersed by the state. In the ensuing chaos, 18 people died and up to 700 more were injured by sabres and truncheons, or trampled underfoot by cavalry horses and the panicking crowd around them. state. In the ensuing chaos, 18 people died and

Poole's painstakingly researched volume has been many years in the making. It holds a wealth of new material, of which the 46 illustrations are a welcome component. The author draws upon more than 400 eyewitness accounts of "the best-documented crowd event of the 19th century", and successfully challenges previous historiography, notably the work of EP Thompson. Poole deftly explains why Peterloo happened in Manchester and not elsewhere in the rapidly industrialising textile districts of northern England. It was the peculiarities of Regency Manchester, where the local authorities operated as "a close-knit oligarchy" hostile to even the faintest whiff of reform, that provided the essential context. These local circumstances played out against a national backdrop of war, high taxation, unemployment and a pitiful lack of food.

Peterloo: The English Uprising is a substantial

book. The first 12 chapters set the scene with a detailed discussion of Manchester politics in 1819, documenting the reformers, rebels, conspirators and rioters, and, of course, the catalyst for the meeting – reformist orator Henry Hunt. Poole then devotes a whole chapter to the march to St Peter's Field, which is as central to the story as the day's ghastly conclusion. Finally, he recounts the horror of the massacre, its aftermath and reckoning. Poole's prose is vivid and peppered with evocative phrases.

The English Uprising is the definitive history of Peterloo - balanced, scholarly yet accessible and, with good reasons, still indignant after 200 years. **H** 

**Dr Janette Martin** is an archivist and historian at the John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester

# A world beneath our feet

MILES RUSSELL enjoys a book that, in focusing on recent archaeological finds, digs back through history to reveal the pre-1066 lives of some of those who called Britain home



Digging Up Britain: Ten Discoveries, A Million Years of History by Mike Pitts Thames and Hudson, 304 pages, £24.95

Many books claim to detail Britain's ancient past, but few are as

absorbing, entertaining and subversively informative as this one. In examining the lost world of ancient Britain, Mike Pitts, archaeologist and journalist, is the ideal guide, describing recent discoveries and explaining their context and significance.

The people who lived on these islands prior to the arrival of William the Conqueror in 1066 seldom intrude upon society today, except in a hazy and often ill-informed way. Prehistory is a period that has traditionally suffered much at school. Pitts, by concentrating on the places, people and artefacts of pre-Norman Britain, goes some significant way to rectifying this.

The structure of the book, focusing on 10 British archaeological discoveries that have "been headlined around the world", is artificial. However, the scope and the depth of the content – ranging from 400,000-yearold elephant-hunting tools found at Barnham, Suffolk to a party of Vikings massacred near Weymouth, Dorset around AD 1000, and from Bronze Age roundhouses in Cambridgeshire to Roman writing tablets uncovered in London - is breathtaking. There is always a danger that in choosing only a few dramatic finds, we could lose sight of the bigger picture, but Pitts' writing captures the enthusiasm of archaeologists (professional and amateur) and the excitement of discovery and subsequent analysis. It is the human story – not just the nameless individuals of a forgotten past, but also the people of today whose lives impinge upon each discovery – that rightly takes centre-stage.

In narrative terms, Pitts moves in a curious reverse-time, from the more recent to the most ancient, just as archaeologists clear soil on site, digging down through layers back



**Buried treasure** Excavations on the site of the Bloomberg building in London turned up around 400 Roman writing tablets (see page 9 for more details). The discovery is one of 10 key finds surveyed in a new book

The people who lived on these islands prior to 1066 seldom intrude upon society today, except in a hazy, ill-informed way

into the past. It's an interesting literary conceit, where each society studied is presented in isolation from what was ultimately to follow. People living in Saxon England, Pitts notes, did not live with the knowledge that they were somehow "doomed" and should not, therefore, be judged against what we now know came after them.

The only real fault is that Pitts focuses almost exclusively on England, with only one of his 10 sites in Scotland and none at all in Wales. Perhaps this reflects the nature of recent developer-funded archaeology, as big infrastructure projects concentrate more in the south. But there have been spectacular projects and discoveries elsewhere in the UK, and their absence somewhat diminishes the book's claim to provide a 'British' perspective.

As Pitts himself observes, however, this is not *the* history of Britain but *a* history. It's a personal and selective account showing how individual discoveries reveal aspects of a wider story, something which will, itself, change as new finds are made and new scientific techniques developed.

Digging Up Britain is a well-argued and beautifully illustrated book, effortlessly explaining archaeological practice and the latest advances in science in order to unravel this very human story. More importantly, given our turbulent times, it helps to address the greater questions of who we are, where we came from and what it really means to be 'British'.

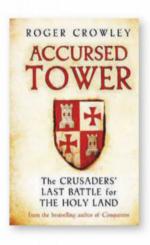
Miles Russell is senior lecturer in prehistoric and Roman archaeology at Bournemouth University

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#### CRUSADES

# Final stand

**SOPHIE THÉRÈSE AMBLER** is carried along by a fast-moving account of the crusaders' doomed defence of Acre



#### Accursed Tower: The Crusaders' Last Battle for the Holy Land by Roger Crowley Yale, 256 pages, £20

In 1291, some 200 years after the crusading movement was launched, the last great

bastion of the Christian territories of the Holy Land finally fell. Over the course of April and May, Acre was besieged by the might of the Mamluk empire, led by sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf Kamil. He brought to bear a terrible array of weaponry: trebuchets, arrowstorms and Greek fire were deployed on a vast scale, while his engineers set about undermining the city's walls. The defence was led by the Templars and Hospitallers, with the help of other crusaders and citizens. They fought and died almost to a man: the Grand Master of the Templars was speared through his armour, lingering long enough to be carried back to the Temple to die in the company of his men. After seeing the body of his fallen comrade, the Marshal of the Hospital, Matthieu de Clermont, led a final charge of Hospitallers and Templars, and was brought down in the fray.

Their recorded deaths stand for those of thousands of nameless men who fell defending Acre; the women who survived the final onslaught were enslaved. In the wake of his annihilating victory, Kamil could boast that: "In one complete hour all of them were captured and swept away. Our glittering swords consumed all the Hospitallers and the Templars... We levelled their churches to the ground, they were slaughtered on their own altars... and [we enslaved] so many women that they were sold for a drachma a piece."

Roger Crowley's chronicle of these events is named for the 'keystone' of Acre's defence, the fortification known by the crusaders as the 'Accursed Tower'. The first half of the book provides a skimming narrative of crusading in the 13th century, featuring the expedition of France's king, Louis IX, that met disaster at Mansurah, and the rise of the

Mongol and Mamluk empires. This sets the stage for the second half, in which Crowley zooms in on events following the accession of Kamil, and then further still on the siege itself. His interest lies particularly in technical military operations (there is a prominent section on the workings of trebuchets), and it could be argued that more is needed in explaining how a disparity of resources played a part in the Mamluks' ability to overwhelm the crusaders. It could also be asked why the decision was made not to provide full references to the literature on which Crowley's interpretations rest.

Still, the focus here in the final chapters – and the book's success – is the weaving of participant narratives into the story. These include the anonymous author known as the 'Templar of Tyre', whose account of these

Kamil brought to bear a terrible array of weaponry. Trebuchets, arrowstorms and Greek fire were deployed on a vast scale, while engineers undermined the city's walls

events is among the most immediate and vivid of crusader writings. He illuminates the distressing realities of the siege, including the effects of Greek fire and the shock of seeing comrades die amid chaos and confusion. Crowley also incorporates several rich and revealing Muslim sources, which allow the story to be told in the voices of those caught up in the bloodshed. In so doing, Crowley provides a fast-paced narrative, woven with dexterity, building to a crescendo that describes the siege in all its harrowing detail.

**Sophie Thérèse Ambler** is lecturer in medieval history and deputy director of the Centre for War and Diplomacy at Lancaster University

#### FROM FACT TO FICTION

#### **Uneasy peace**

**Caroline Scott** discusses *The Photographer of the Lost*, set in the aftermath of 1914–18

#### How was the fall-out of the First World War felt across Britain?

Lloyd George had pledged "to make Britain a fit country for heroes to live in", but the economic aftershocks of the war would cause promised projects to be shelved, and as unemployment figures rose, disenchantment spread. On Peace Day, 19 July 1919, ex-servicemen marched through Manchester carrying banners that said "Work, not charity" and "Honour the dead, remember the living". In 1922 around half a million veterans were unemployed. While some men fitted back into civilian life easily, others found the transition difficult. With the discipline and support network of the armed services taken away, some struggled – and many families, mine included, would face decades of coping with depression, alcohol abuse and violence.

# Why does the aftermath of war make such an interesting setting for a historical novel?

War has always had a pull for novelists because it's a time of extremes, of emotional highs and lows, when people are at their best and their worst. And that extends into the aftermath. This was a period of disruption and dislocation, of searches and changes, of remembrance and reunions, of ruins and rebuilding.

#### What issues did the women left behind in the First World War face?

With around one in eight British men in uniform killed, and more than one in four wounded, women had to cope with the emotional, practical and financial fallout. Meanwhile, the economies of every home were tested: rents increased, there were shortages of food and fuel, queues lengthened and prices were always rising. Women entered new forms of employment, some of it heavy and dangerous, much of it also skilled. There were

hardships, but also new freedoms, and their expectations shifted.

The Photographer of the Lost by Caroline Scott (Simon & Schuster, 512 pages, £12.99)

# URGENT APPEAL: help Syrian refugee parents like Khitam to protect their children through the winter.



Khitam lives with her four young children, husband Abdelsalam, and his elderly parents in a single, damp room of a half-built apartment block near Tripoli, Lebanon.

There are holes in the walls and ceiling, and they share a toilet with other refugee families crammed into the building. Khitam and Abdelsalam are mentally and physically exhausted after years

of struggling to survive, unable to earn a living and fighting a daily, relentless battle to feed their children.

Right now, they are terrified by the prospect of another winter in their cold, uninsulated single room. Another winter where they will feel every blast of icy wind. Another winter where every time their children cough or sneeze they will fear they have contracted a lethal respiratory condition like pneumonia or tuberculosis.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, needs your support to help parents protect their children this winter.

Please will you give £75 to provide a refugee family like Khitam's with a **DURING STORM NORMA** winter IN LEBANON, survival kit to **JANUARY 2019** protect against the freezing

#### weather?

The kit contains essentials such as a heating stove, thermal blankets and a tarpaulin for insulation. It could mean survival for a family like Khitam's.

Two winters ago, as a result of their exposed and unsanitary living conditions, Khitam and all four of her children became ill. Baby Bilal had a high temperature and diarrhoea. Her sons Khaled (3, pictured) and Abdul Rahman (8) had chest infections and their sister

Fatimah (4) contracted worms. Khitam herself developed painful growths on her throat and lost her voice.

Without access

to a free healthcare could provide a system like we have in the UK, Syrian refugee family with a Khitam became winter survival overwhelmed with worry about how to pay for the treatment and medicines her children needed.

"I felt helpless. My children were coughing and crying and there was nothing I could do."

Khitam believes that without assistance from UNHCR "my children would be dead".

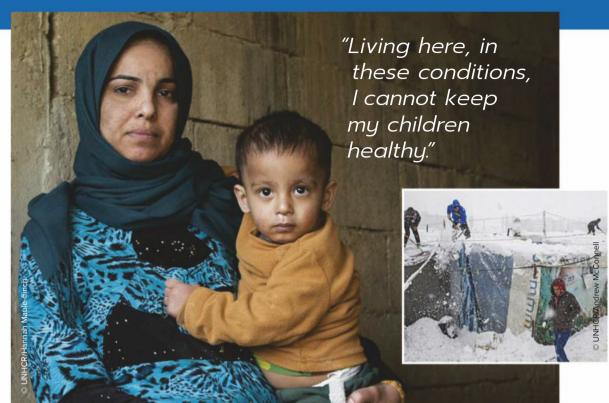
> Across Lebanon and Jordan, seven of the last eight

winters have brought heavy snowfall and temperatures regularly drop below 0°C.

Right now, with fighting continuing in Syria, 1.7 million refugees remain unable to return home. They are living, like Khitam's family, in derelict buildings, or in makeshift shelters made

of little more than wood and plastic sheeting. With temperatures falling, the lives of the most vulnerable - young children, pregnant women and the elderly - are at grave risk.

With a gift of £75 you can provide a winter survival kit containing a stove, blankets, winter clothes and a tarpaulin to help a family insulate and heat their home. Please give today – you could save the lives of children like Khitam's.



#### Give at unhcr.org/wintersupport or call **0800 029 3883**

#### With £75, you can give a winter survival kit containing:



**STOVE** For heating and cooking. An absolute essential.



**BLANKET** Families left their homes with nothing. A simple blanket could save a life.



**TARPAULIN** For insulation. Keeps the cold out and the warmth in.



Hats, gloves, scarves and coats to keep families warm, both inside and outside of shelters.

Yes, I will help	<b>Syrian</b>	refugee	families
survive the wil	nter		

kit



survivo	e tne winter		3/2	The UN Hefugee Agency
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# WORDS BY ELLIE CAWTHORNE AND MATT ELTON

#### FICTION

#### **Sword of Kings**

by Bernard Cornwell (Harper Collins, 340 pages, £20)

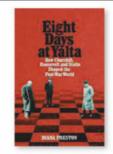


#### Fight for the throne

Over the course of 12 volumes, Bernard Cornwell's *Last Kingdom* novels (and the accompanying TV adaptation) have served up fast-paced adventure stories set in realms populated by battling Saxons and Danes. This latest instalment promises more of the same, as we find protagonist Uhtred of Bebbanburg catapulted once more into bitter conflict, with an important oath to fulfil.

#### wwii

Eight Days at Yalta: How Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin Shaped the Postwar World by Diana Preston



#### **Best laid plans**

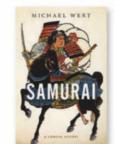
At Yalta in February 1945, the future of postwar Europe was decided, as the 'Big Three' – Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt – went head to head over how to put the broken continent back together for peacetime. Borders were redrawn, nations dissected. Preston's account goes beyond the "Eight Days" of the title to explore how the spirit of collaboration quickly dissolved once the conference was over.



#### Samurai: A Concise History

(Picador, 368 pages, £25)

by Michael Wert (Oxford University Press, 128 pages, £12.99)



#### Ways of the warriors

Few figures have captured the popular imagination like the sword-wielding samurai warrior, but as Michael Wert states here, "As with anything else, the historical depiction is more interesting than the popularised one." In this myth-busting race through 1,100 years of samurai history, Wert reveals how the Japanese warrior class not only influenced military matters, but also culture, religion and the arts.



#### Renia's Diary: A Young Girl's Life in the Shadow of the Holocaust

by Renia Spiegel (Ebury, 464 pages, £16.99)



#### **Painful memories**

When war broke out in 1939, Renia Spiegel was a Polish-Jewish teenager who dreamed of becoming a poet. She kept a diary, documenting life in her hometown of Przemyśl (see page 30 for more on the city) through Soviet and Nazi occupation. Recently rediscovered, Renia's diary entries and poems are presented with an epilogue from her sister and an introduction by historian Deborah Lipstadt.



#### Voices of History: Speeches that Changed the World

by Simon Sebag Montefiore (W&N, 288 pages, £14.99)



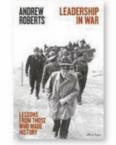
#### **Oral history**

Following 2018's Written in History, in which Simon Sebag Montefiore selected letters that shaped the past, the historian turns to the spoken word. Elizabeth I talks up her "heart and stomach of a king"; Churchill promises to fight on the beaches; Reagan implores Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall. Each entry features commentary, and recent names (Greta Thunberg, the Obamas) bring the story up to date.

#### POLITICS

#### Leadership in War: Lessons from those who Made History by Andrew Roberts

(Allen Lane, 256 pages, £20)



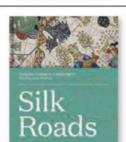
#### **Command and control**

This slim volume offers overviews of the successes (and failures) of figures such as Nelson, Napoleon, Hitler and Churchill, to explore how the careers of history's most famous leaders were forged in the white heat of conflict. Andrew Roberts reveals how military engagements were used to achieve political ends, and why one person's charisma could command the attention of millions.

#### VISUAL

#### Silk Roads: Peoples, Cultures, Landscapes edited by Susan Whitfield

(Thames and Hudson, 480 pages, £49.95)



#### Trading places

Four years on from Peter Frankopan's bestselling *The Silk Roads*, there's a renewed understanding of the historical importance of these routes. This weighty look at the trading networks that linked Europe and Asia from 200 BC to AD 1400 is structured around terrain – rivers, mountains, deserts – and highlights artefacts that show how trade affected everything from religion and art to science and technology.

#### RELIGION

#### Unbelievers: An Emotional History of Doubt

by Alec Ryrie (William Collins, 272 pages, £20)



#### The abolition of God

"Who killed him, when, and how?" These are among the questions posed in the introduction to this look at the emergence of post-God societies – and the answer, it suggests, is closer to home than we might expect. Indeed, rather than the only suspects being philosophers outside of the church, it seems that unbelief also originated from within, resulting in atheism becoming a belief in its own right.



# ENCOUNTERS

**80 DIARY: LISTEN / WATCH / VISIT** 

By Jon Bauckham and Jonathan Wright

88 EXPLORE... Old Sarum

90 TRAVEL TO... Luxembourg



2020 / britishmuseum.org





#### WATCH

#### Up in the air

If we could better predict the weather, think of the benefits, opines James Glaisher (Eddie Redmayne) in the new film The Aeronauts. As we're in the Victorian era and his mutton-chopped contemporaries think meteorology is a fad, he needs a way to sell this idea.

This way leads straight up as, with the help of balloon pilot Amelia Wren (Felicity Jones), he ascends to take atmospheric readings at a height we now associate with jetliners.

It is a charming drama, albeit one that takes liberties with the past in that Wren is a fictional character. In reality, Glaisher flew most often with Henry Tracey Coxwell.

#### **The Aeronauts**

In cinemas from 4 November



Some of the cash stolen in the Great Train Robbery was found and photographed

#### VISIT

#### Stamping out crime

More than a half a century later, the story of the Great Train Robbery when a gang of criminals hijacked a Royal Mail train and made off with £2.6m in cash (around £53m today) continues to shock and surprise.

Drawing upon information found in a set of recently declassified files, the Postal Museum's new exhibition reveals how the 1963 heist unfolded, and the role of the little-known Post Office Investigation Branch in solving an array of crimes across the railways.

#### The Great Train Robbery: Crime & the Post

The Postal Museum, London / Until April 2020 / postalmuseum.org

#### LISTEN

#### Skeletal beats

It's an idea both ingenious and macabre. During the Cold War, when so much music was forbidden by communism's ever-watchful censors, people made bootleg recordings on used hospital X-ray plates that came complete with images of fractured bones (pictured).

How did this practice develop? In a new Radio 3 documentary, composer Stephen Coates tells the story, discovering which music was most in demand. Rock'n'roll and jazz inevitably feature, as does the tango of Ukrainian Pyotr Leshchenko (1898–1954).

The documentary also includes interviews with bootleggers and, with the help of Russian rock stars Mumiy Troll, features a demonstration of how X-ray recording works.





#### **Bone Music**

BBC Radio 3 / Scheduled for 10 November

#### **WEEKLY TV & RADIO**

Visit *historyextra.com* for weekly updates on upcoming TV and radio programmes

# Olivia Colman inherits Claire Foy's role as Queen Elizabeth II in the third series of Netflix saga The Crown

#### WATCH

#### Scenes from royal life

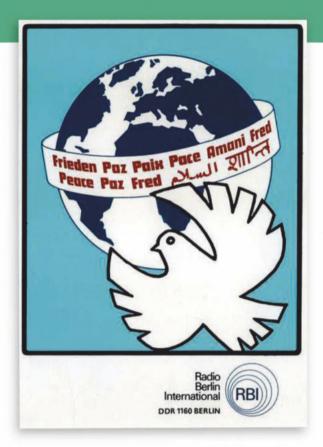
It says much about how our culture and society has changed that the return of scriptwriter and show-runner Peter Morgan's The Crown is among the most anticipated TV events of the year. Here is a series made, at vast expense and with A-list talent, by a streaming channel and which, unthinkable within living memory, deals with the tangled lives of the Windsors.

It's also terrific, a compelling family saga that adroitly explores how Britain has changed since the Second World War. The third series begins in 1964, and sees new actors playing key parts, with Olivia Colman as Elizabeth II and Helena Bonham Carter as Princess Margaret.

The series will focus in great part on Margaret's troubled marriage to Lord Snowdon (Ben Daniels). It will also, according to Tobias Menzies, who plays Prince Philip, feature an episode in which the royal consort is transfixed by the Apollo 11 moon landing, and the contrast between the astronauts' heroism and his own privileged life.

#### The Crown

Netflix / Streaming from 17 November



A 'reply card', used by RBI listeners outside the GDR to acknowledge the reception of the station in foreign countries

#### LISTEN

#### View from the east

If the idea of a radio station that was "the voice of the German Democratic Republic" sounds grey and drab, think again. Part of the remit of Radio Berlin International (RBI) was to reach out to audiences in Africa. This involved playing upbeat African tunes, and emphasising already existing bonds between East Germany and emerging African nations such as Tanzania and Angola.

Partly staffed by African émigrés, RBI operated out of East Berlin where, according to Dr Emily Oliver who presents a new programme on the station, the working atmosphere was very different to elsewhere in the repressive GDR. That's not to say that RBI's journalists and presenters weren't closely policed though, as, operating under a regime that imposed strict reporting restrictions, they tried to compete with stations that offered a very different worldview: West Germany's **Deutsche Welle and the BBC** World Service.

The documentary also hears from RBI listeners and considers its impact in a Cold War era when many African states were fighting for independence.

#### **Comrade Africa**

BBC World Service / Scheduled for 9 November

# HISTORY ON THE BOX

# "I could work out exactly where my grandfather would have been... the river was running red with blood"



Match of the Day presenter **GARY LINEKER** discusses his new BBC One documentary, in which he researches the story behind his grandfather's Second World War service with the Royal Army Medical Corps in Italy

#### What are the origins of this new documentary?

When I filmed an episode of [BBC genealogy series] Who Do You Think You Are? in 2013, I first discovered this incredible tale about the involvement of my maternal grandfather, Stanley Abbs, in the Second World War battle of Monte Cassino [which was fought between January and May 1944, and resulted in 55,000 Allied casualties]. However, because the episode already had so many amazing family stories to cover, they didn't have the chance to feature it.

# What did you learn about the 'D-Day Dodgers' [a phrase associated with those assigned to Italy]?

As we progressed with filming, the more it emerged that the phrase couldn't have been further from the truth. The famous song 'D-Day Dodgers' [with its references to life being easy in Italy] is actually much more self-deprecating than many might know. The truth of the matter is that the campaign was incredibly grim.

## Were there any particularly emotional moments during filming?

We were investigating a story about the men having to get across a river. When we got to the other side, I could work out exactly where my grandfather would have been in the ambulance medical aid tent. I knew that, only a few yards from where I stood, some absolutely harrowing scenes would have taken place. The river was literally running red with blood.

### What kind of people did you meet along the way?

I met two amazing guys: 104-yearold William Earl, and Fred Mason, who was 95 years old. Fred climbed up about 90 steps with me, because he wanted to do our chat on the top of the hill at the battlefield – I think that I was more out of breath than he was! I asked him if he was scared during the war, and he replied: "All the time. And anybody that says they weren't scared is a liar." That really resonated with me.

#### What would you like viewers to take away from the film?

I think the most important thing for me is getting the story out there. Although it's a story about my grandfather, it's also the story of thousands of other people from the UK and countries such as the US, Poland, India and New Zealand. To go through Italy as they did, through these mountainous positions with the Germans on the top of the hill constantly firing at them, is just unimaginable.

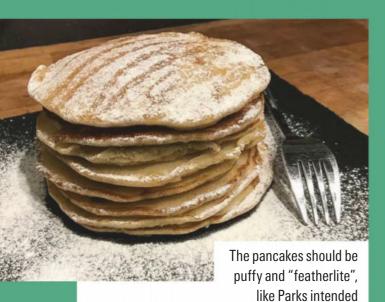
I wish that my mum had been alive to have seen this programme. She would have been so proud.

The documentary, which has the working title *Gary Lineker: My Grandad's Untold War*, will be broadcast on BBC One in November



Gary Lineker traces his grandfather's footsteps in Italy with help from veterans including Fred Mason

# HISTORY COOKBOOK



#### TASTE

# Rosa Parks's pancakes

In 2015, the US Library of Congress released a treasure trove of documents belonging to the late civil rights activist Rosa Parks. As well as letters from the likes of Martin Luther King Jr, the cache also contained ephemera from Parks's day-to-day life, including a recipe for "featherlite pancakes".

Penned on an old envelope, the cheap recipe sheds light on the financial hardship that Parks endured following the 1955–56 Montgomery bus boycott, which resulted in her losing her job and moving to Detroit (see page 15 for more on this episode). It also reveals her Alabama roots, specifying the addition of peanut butter – a famous export from her hometown of Tuskegee.

Difficulty: 1/10 / Time: 30 minutes

#### INGREDIENTS

125g flour
2 tbsp baking powder
1/2 tsp salt
2 tbsp sugar
1 egg
300ml milk
85g peanut butter
1 tbsp olive oil (for frying)

#### METHOD

Sift the flour, baking powder, salt and sugar together and set aside. Using a separate bowl, blend the egg, milk and peanut butter until smooth.

Combine the two sets of ingredients, being careful not to over-mix, before adding around a ladle-worth of batter to an oiled pan or griddle.

Each pancake should be fried on both sides for 60 seconds, or until puffy and golden brown. Serve immediately.

#### VISIT

# Revolutionary stories

Thomas Paine is one of the most important figures in the history of radical politics. Born in Norfolk in 1737, Paine's incendiary writings inspired legions of supporters in Europe and across the Atlantic, where his bestselling pamphlet

- Common Sense (1776) – was adopted as a manifesto for American independence.

Yet despite campaigning for a number of causes that we take for granted today (such as the abolition of slavery), Paine remains controversial – not least among some Britons, who regard him as a traitor.

Drawing upon a wide variety of primary sources, an exhibition at Salford's Working Class Movement Library looks at Paine's powerful legacy, and the ways in which his ideas still resonate with thousands of people today.

Shining a light on the local perspective, the display also tells the remarkable true story of how Paine's body was dug up and taken to Manchester by the reformer William Cobbett in 1819 – a tale that serves as inspiration for the Library's ongoing 'Bones of Paine' project, which will culminate with a parade to mark the bicentenary of the incident on 30 November.

## Thomas Paine: Citizen of the World

Working Class Movement Library, Salford / 27 November 2019 – 26 March 2020 / wcml.org.uk/events





A c1813 cartoon mocks the notion of "free-born Englishmen" in an age without true political representation

#### WATCH

#### Red peril

First serialised in *Pearson's Magazine* in 1897, HG Wells's *The War of the Worlds* is one of science fiction's foundational texts: *the* alien invasion yarn and one that's been regularly updated and revisited in different adaptations down the years. So much so that it seems almost counterintuitive for a lavish new BBC adaptation to return the story to England and the era of empire, as it follows what happens after Martian "intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic" cast greedy eyes upon Earth.

It's an approach that brings out much about how the original text – in touching on themes such as colonialism and imperialism, social Darwinism and evolution – tackled some of the thorniest intellectual issues of Wells's own time. Happily, it doesn't do so at the expense of delivering

a rip-roaring yarn.

This time around, a starry cast includes Eleanor Tomlinson, Rafe Spall, Rupert Graves and Robert Carlyle, while Peter Harness (*Dr Who, Wallander, Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell*) provides the script. Footage of terrifying tripods suggests that rumoured problems with the special effects have been solved.

#### The War of the Worlds

BBC One / Scheduled for November





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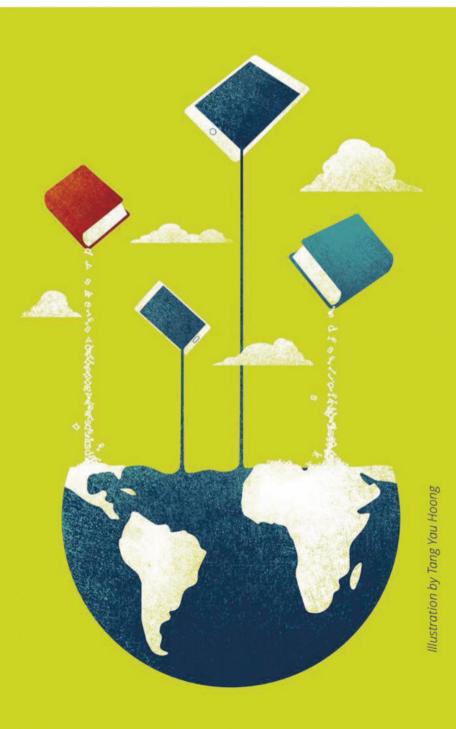
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Celebrity panellists will select their 100 favourite novels

#### WATCH

#### Reading the past

This year marks the 300th birthday of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, often said to be the first English-language novel. It's a cue for the BBC to launch *The Novels That Shaped Our World*, an ambitious season of live events and programming in which six literary celebrities compile a list of the 100 most influential novels of all time.

The season will also include a threepart BBC Two series airing this autumn, set to examine the novel from three perspectives: empire and slavery, women's voices, and working-class experiences.

For more on Britain's most influential novels, read our feature on page 56

#### The Novels That Shaped Our World

BBC Two / Scheduled for autumn



A 17th-century woodcut, depicting a group of witches and warlocks dancing with the devil

#### LISTEN

#### **Misplaced fears**

For King James VI of Scotland and I of England (1566–1625), the threat posed by witches was very real, and it's no coincidence that his reign coincided with a series of witch hunts north of the border, notably in 1597.

A new six-part radio and podcast series traces the stories behind these febrile episodes, exploring their impact on ordinary Scottish women.

#### Witch-Hunt

BBC Radio Scotland & podcast / Starts 31 October

#### VISIT

#### Home front heroines

While the Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) is best known today for its network of hospital shops and cafes, the charity was originally founded as a women's civil defence organisation, helping to prepare Britain for the possibility of air raids during the Second World War.

As well as driving ambulances and collecting salvage, the RVS (then known as the Women's Voluntary Services) was also on hand to provide "compassion in crisis" – a role that has continued into peacetime, with the organisation offering support in the wake of tragedies such as the Hillsborough disaster.

On display at the Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum, a free exhibition traces the history of the Royal Voluntary Service in Glasgow, and the ways in which its members have supported the city during difficult times.

Through documents gleaned from the RVS archives, visitors can not only learn about the role of local volunteers during wartime, but also about how initiatives such as lunch clubs continue to provide a source of comfort to Glaswegians in need, 80 years on.

#### **Compassion in Crisis**



3BC/BRIDGEMAN/ROYAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE – (

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# The regal and the rotten

Perched on a windswept hilltop overlooking Salisbury Plain, the abandoned settlement of Old Sarum was once a thriving medieval city. **NIGEL JONES** takes a visit to the site's stone ruins, and dwells upon the political and religious significance it held for our forebears

n 2 May 1831, 11 men, accompanied by a gaggle of electoral officials, gathered under a tree on a flat hilltop north of Salisbury to cast their votes in the general election of that year.

The men – none of whom actually lived in the 'constituency' – were the sole electors returning two unopposed Members of Parliament for the seat of Old Sarum, most notorious of the 'rotten boroughs', unrepresentative seats in the pockets of aristocratic families who dominated the era's politics. Indeed, the deserted settlement had once been owned by the Pitt family, which had given Britain two famous prime ministers: William Pitt the elder and younger.

The following year, parliament passed the Great Reform Act, consigning rotten boroughs to history. As a result, that summer gathering was the last time Old Sarum played a significant part in British history.

#### Norman fortress

With its position high above the Wiltshire countryside, Old Sarum had been a focal point of military, ecclesiastical and political power for centuries, with evidence of human habitation dating back to the Neolithic age.

Fortified by the Saxon kings of Wessex, the settlement was in the front line of the long struggle against the Vikings. But it was the Normans who built a motte-and-bailey castle with stone to replace the earlier hillforts, soon after completing their conquest in 1070. It is the walls of this fortress, which gird the circular site, that are the most visible extant remains that draw visitors today.

The most pivotal figure in making Old Sarum the medieval nerve centre that it

II Old Sarum cathedral seemed jinxed from the off. A storm and lightning strike ripped off its roof within days of its completion II

became was King William's cousin, Saint Osmund, who helped produce Domesday Book. As the local bishop, Osmund began the building of a cathedral just north-west of the castle. But the building seemed jinxed from the start. A storm and lightning strike tore off its roof within days of its completion.

Nevertheless, Old Sarum remained of vital religious and secular importance, with a royal palace constructed within the castle where successive monarchs – William Rufus, Henry I, Stephen – held court and councils. Henry II even imprisoned his queen, Eleanor of Aquitaine, there.

#### **Cold comfort**

In the end, it was the English weather that sealed Old Sarum's fate. The clerics who ran the cathedral constantly complained of the cold winds that whistled through their cloisters, and of the lack of water on their high hill, and petitioned to move the building to a lowland site three miles to the south.

Permission was finally granted, and the magnificent new cathedral of Salisbury was consecrated in 1258. The masons who built the impressive structure cannibalised the stone from the old cathedral, and the civilian population of Old Sarum migrated to the more convenient location. Edward II abandoned the castle and palace in 1322, and Henry VIII eventually sold the remains. Despite this, the deserted ruin perversely continued to send its two MPs to Westminster for a further four centuries.

Following repeated excavations during the 20th century, the outlines of the original cathedral have been marked out in stone and visitors to the English Heritage-managed site can pace the place where choirs once sang their praises. Marvelling at the distant view of today's city of Salisbury – or New Sarum – today's tourists only need a little imagination to conjure up the ghosts of a setting that played such a key part in our island story.

Nigel Jones is a historian and biographer

VISIT For more information, head over to: english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/old-sarum





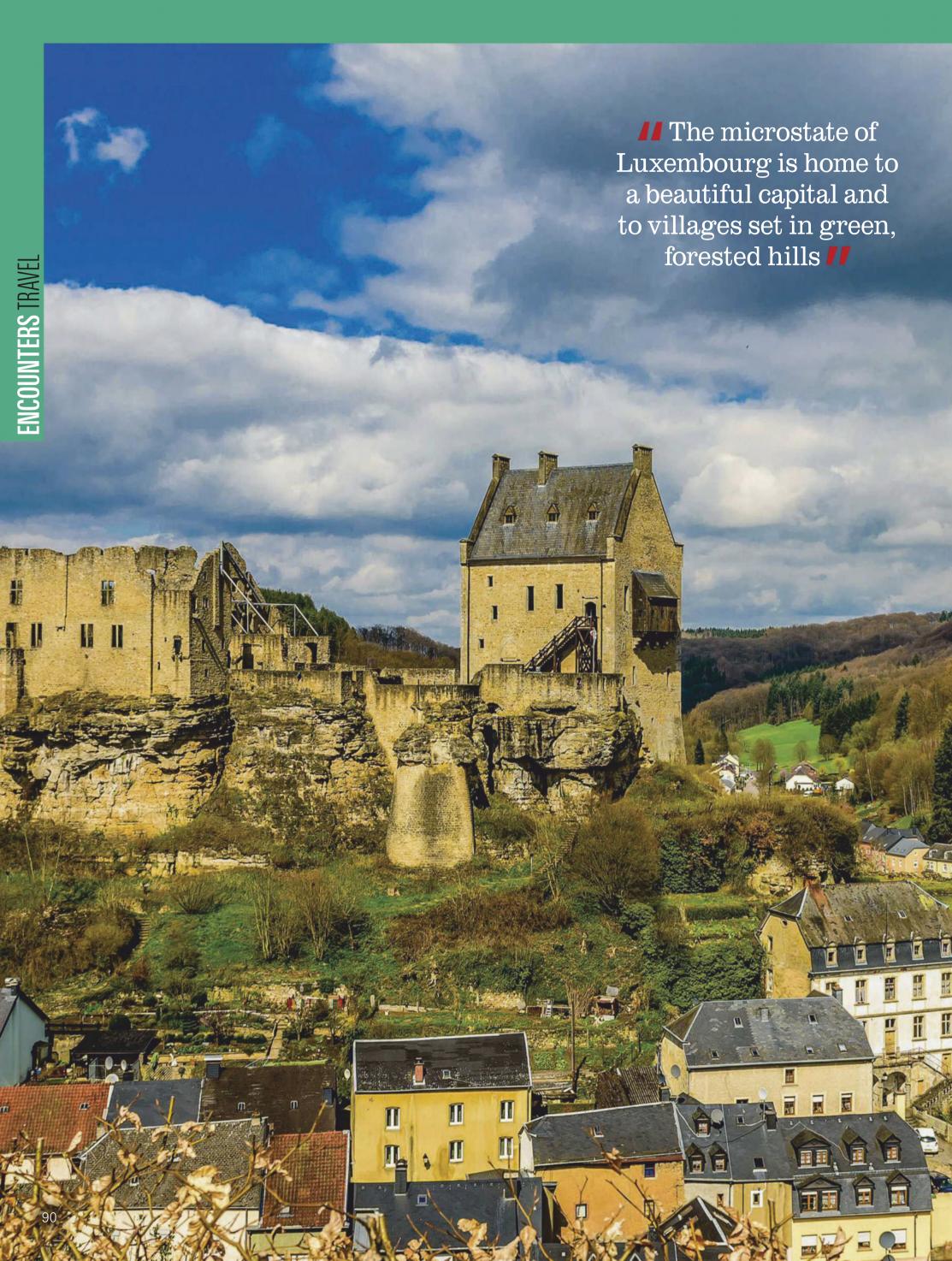
☐ The site of the central castle at Old Sarum, a stronghold ☐ built by the Normans





#### MORE FROM US

For more features on medieval history, go to historyextra.com/ period/medieval



# Splendid ruin One of many historic sites in Luxembourg, Larochette's castle dominates the town below

# TRAVEL TO... LUXEMBOURG

# Rural beauty and Gothic grandeur

Luxembourg may be famous for its small size, but the European microstate deserves to be known as an attractive tourist destination. Squeezed between Belgium, France and Germany, the Grand Duchy is home to a beautiful capital and to villages set in green, forested hills.

Luxembourg owes its independence to the 19th-century struggles for supremacy between Napoleon III's France and Bismarck's Prussian empire. With other European powers keen to ensure the Grand Duchy's continued neutrality, one long-term result of the 1867 Treaty of London was Luxembourg's reaffirmation as a buffer between these great rivals.

With its medieval old town, ramparts and museums, the capital, Luxembourg City, is a perfect starting point for a visit. But this is no city state. Beyond the capital there are lovely villages and towns to visit too. Echternach, with its Gothic core, and Esch-sur-Sûre, towering over the river below, are arguably the pick of the bunch. West of here are some of the nation's best hiking trails. In the north of the country, the Vennbahn – one of the world's longest converted railway cycle paths – stretches at a gentle gradient to Aachen in south-west Germany.

Luxembourg is separated from Germany by the Moselle river, which has vineyards hugging its banks. Foodies will love exploring producer villages along the way, culminating in Schengen, the village where Luxembourg, France and Germany meet, and the location for the signing of the European Economic Community's open borders agreement in 1985. In fact, there is even a museum dedicated to the agreement in the village's European Centre.

The country is well connected by plane and train from the UK, making this prime territory for a short break.

#### **IF YOU LIKE THIS...**

- Take a relaxed tour down the Rhine from Bonn to Mannheim, Germany for castles, half-timbered villages and folklore galore.
- **Liechtenstein** is another small European state that, while being little visited, is also notable for its natural beauty.

.....

**By Tom Hall**, travel writer and author of *Lonely Planet's Best Ever Travel Tips* 



# Christmas Gift Guide





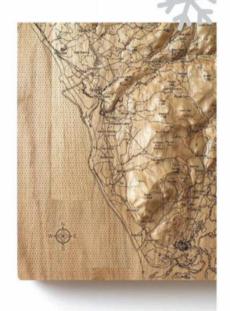




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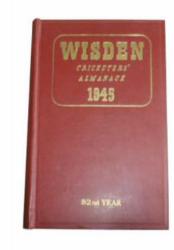
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The festive season is almost here and it's the perfect time to treat family and friends to something special.

Here you will find a selection of options for the history lover in your life.

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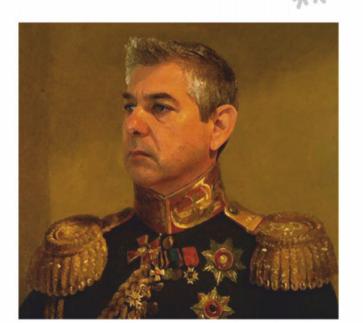




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# CHRISTMAS DAYS OUT

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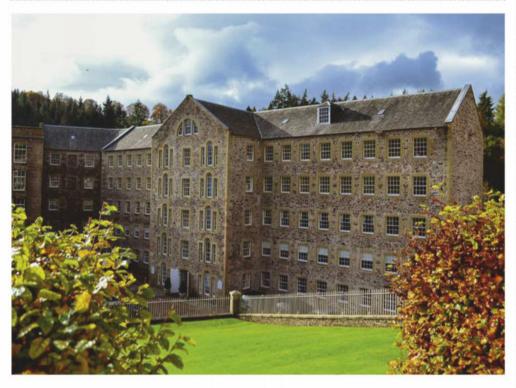
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#### **PLYMOUTH CHRISTMAS MARKET**



Located in the heart of Britain's Ocean City from 28 November to 19 December, Plymouth Christmas Market offers a joyful shopping experience. Browse more than 50 stalls housed in wooden cabins, indulge at the Bavarian Bar and street food stands or snap a festive selfie in front of the giant illuminated bauble.

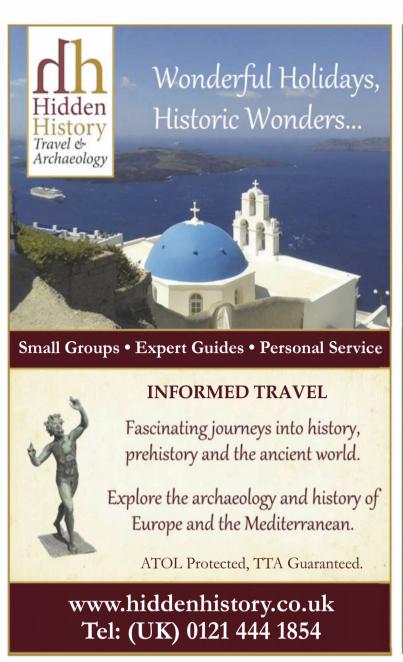
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#### PRIZE CROSSWORD

#### Across

- 1 London store which, in 1898, offered customers the UK's first 'moving staircase' (7)
- **5** Field marshal who commanded the Prussians at Waterloo in 1815 (7)
- **9** Scandinavian king who strengthened the system of absolute monarchy initiated by his father, Frederick, whom he succeeded in 1670 (9,1)
- 11 '\_\_ of evil' was George W Bush's description of Iran, Iraq and North Korea (4)
- **12** Capital of the Zulu kingdom, burned by the British after the battle of 1879 (6)
- 13 Italian scientist given a life sentence for his heretical views about the sun's motion in 1633 (7)
- **14** The width of a man's thumb was supposedly the basis for this measure (4)
- 16 Hampshire naval town that played a major role in supplying the D-Day fleet during the Second World War (7)
- **19** More than 1,000 years old, it claims to be the oldest continuous parliamentary assembly in the world (7)
- **20** The surname of the brothers involved in the gunfight at the OK Corral in 1881 (4)
- 22 Italian town famous for its musical instrument makers, such as Amati and Stradivari (7)
- 24 The last major one ended around 11,700 years ago (3,3)
- 26 Negotiations between USSR and US, which began at Helsinki in 1969 (4)
- 27 John \_\_\_, who became a well-known figure as secretary of the British Board of Film Censors (1958-71) (9)
- **28** George, US entrepreneur and inventor who introduced the Kodak box camera (7)
- **29** A governor of one of the provinces of the Achaemenian empire, created by Darius I (6)

#### Down

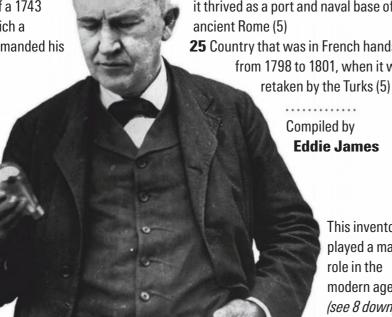
**2** One spelling of the Anglo-Saxon term for a noble of royal blood (8)

3 Lady Jane Grey's (disputed) \_\_ lasted only a few days (5) 4 German location of a 1743 battle, the last in which a British monarch commanded his troops in the field (9) **6** Head of the Vichy government in Nazi-occupied

France, executed

as a traitor in

1945 (5)



11 13 16 18 19 20 22 24 25 29

7 Luxembourg evolved into a modern state during the constitutional reign of this grand duchess (9)

- 8 A 19th/20th-century American businessman whose inventions played a major role in the modern age (6)
- **10** A period of the Roman empire renowned for its literature, from such writers as Virgil, Horace and Ovid (8,3)
- 15 Dutch and other European settlers' (pejorative) name for Khoikhoi people of South Africa (9)
- 17 The 21 members of the committee formed in 1310 to limit Edward II's power (9)
- 18 Anglicised spelling of a royal dynasty of Portugal, which ended with Manuel II in 1910 (8)

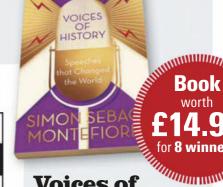
**21** Simon \_\_\_, historian and TV presenter whose books include a three-volume history of Britain (6)

23 Until the silting up of its harbour, it thrived as a port and naval base of

25 Country that was in French hands from 1798 to 1801, when it was

> Compiled by **Eddie James**

> > This inventor played a major role in the modern age (see 8 down)



Book

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#### **Solution to our October 2019 Crossword**

Across: 8 Arrian 9 Harold II 11 Anschluss 12 Delft 13 Carib 15 Israelite 17 Chiang Kai-shek 22 Herodotus 24 Mahdi 26 Chess 28 Thermidor 30 Achilles 31 Creole

**Down:** 1 Jamaica 2 Fraser 3 Bath 4 Mauser 6 Adelaide 7 Sixties 10 Turing 16 Epsom 18 Harlech 19 Apsley 20 Choctaw 21 Diaries 23 Tithe 25 Hudson 27/5 Silk Road 29/14 Mary Beard

#### Five winners of World War II Infographics

B Derbyshire, Cheshire; B Fellows, Coventry; S Childs, Kilmarnock; AJ Smith, Loughborough; R Norris, Durham

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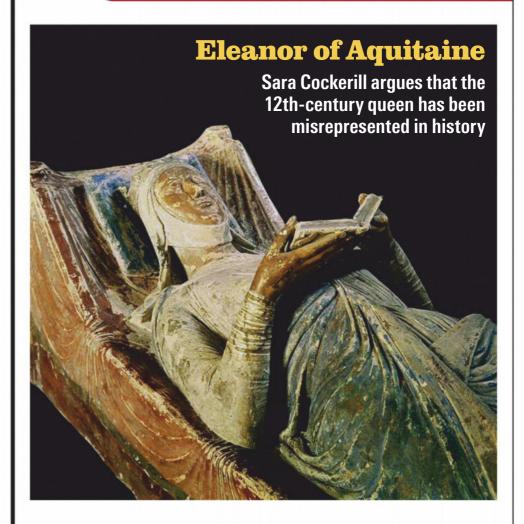
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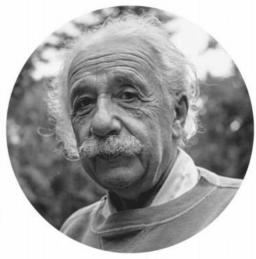
# NEXT MONTH

Christmas issue on sale 28 November 2019



# Einstein on the run

Andrew Robinson charts the scientist's brief, but eventful, spell in Britain, after he had fled the Nazis





# Festive surprises

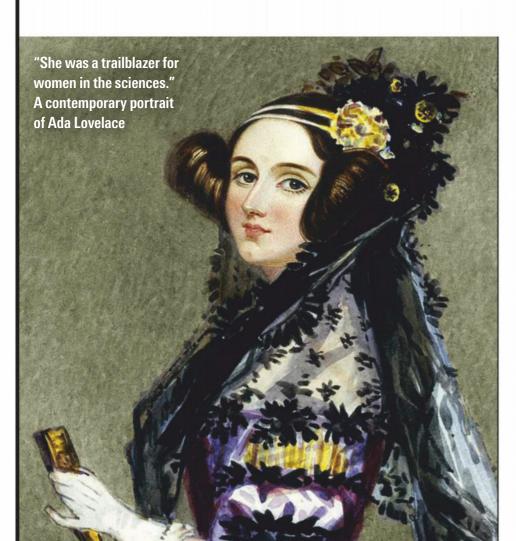
Sam Willis and James Daybell on some unusual Christmases past

#### War leaders

Andrew Roberts explains how great warriors learned from history Television presenter and author Konnie Huq chooses

# **Ada Lovelace**

1815-52



IN PROFILE

Ada Lovelace was a mathematician and writer. The only legitimate daughter of Lord Byron, she is best known for her work helping to develop Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine, a calculation machine which is essentially an early incarnation of a computer. The mother-of-three died of uterine cancer in London aged 36, and at her request was buried next to her father in Nottinghamshire.

If Charles Babbage is considered the father of the computer, Ada Lovelace has just as much right to be considered its mother



Konnie Huq is best known for presenting Blue Peter from 1997–2008, and is an ambassador for the British Red Cross. Her children's novel Cookie and the Most Annoying Boy in the World was published by Piccadilly Press in August

When did you first hear about Lovelace? I think I first heard about her in my teens, and made a film about her for *Blue Peter* in my twenties when I was fresh out of university. I've always felt an affinity with her, as she had both a creative and a scientific side. I remember being surprised so few people knew about this remarkable individual.

What kind of woman was she? She was the daughter of Lord Byron, so naturally had a creative side, and just from reading her letters you can seen that she had a flair for words which would have been more apparent if she had become a writer. But her mother, Lady Byron, was a mathematician, and after she and her husband broke up, she – unusually for the time, and partly as an act of revenge on her philandering partner – pushed Ada into an education in science and maths: a very forward-thinking act.

What made Lovelace a hero? Firstly, her work in helping to develop Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine. He's been described as the 'father of the computer', but Ada took his notes and expanded on them, so played a much bigger part in the story than people realise. She also embodies, for me, the fact that science and the arts don't need to be mutually exclusive. Her father was a poet and her mother a mathematician, and you can see both influences in her work. Lastly, she was a trailblazer generally for women in the sciences.

What was Lovelace's finest hour? Undoubtedly her role in developing the Analytical Engine. She understood the machine's real significance, and saw that it could be more than a mere number-cruncher. Most uses that we put computers to today, and they are so varied, would not have been possible if Ada had not recognised the potential of Babbage's computer beyond a simple calculating machine all those years ago. So if he is considered the father of the computer, she has just as much right to be considered its mother.

Is there anything that you don't admire about her? She got into gambling and had a bad time of it, unfortunately.

**Do you have any inventions up your sleeve?** I have loads of great ideas, though I've yet to bring them to fruition. But if they ever want to do a *Celebrity Dragons' Den*, I'm there!

**If you could meet Lovelace, what would you ask her?** I'd like to know
whether she was annoyed by the fact that,
even today, Charles Babbage is credited with
inventing the Analytical Engine, while she
remains less well known. 

Konnie Huq was talking to York Membery

#### LISTEN AGAIN

Konnie Huq championed Ada Lovelace on Radio 4's **Great Lives**: bbc.co.uk/ programmes/b03b0ydy





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